Red Saunders' Pets and Other Critters

HENRY WALLACE PHILLIPS

He was a lovely pet

Red Saunders' Pets
And Other Critters

By

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Red Saunders' Pets And Other Critters

The Pets

OF all the worlds I ever broke into, this one's the most curious," said Red. "And one of the curiousest things in it is that I think it's queer. Why should I, now? What put it into our heads that affairs ought to go so and so and so, when they never do anything of the sort? Take any book you read, or any story a man tells you: it runs along about how Mr. Smith made up his mind to do this or that, and proceeded to do it. And that never happened. What Mr. Smith calls making up his mind is nothing more nor less than Mr. Smith's dodging to cover under pressure of circumstances. That's straight. Old Lady Luck comes for Mr. Smith's mind, swinging both hands; she gives it a stem-winder on the ear; lams it for keeps on the smeller; chugs it one in the short ribs, drives right and left into its stummick, and Mr. Smith's mind breaks for cover; then Mr. Smith tells his wife that—he's made up his

mind—*He,* mind you. Wouldn't that stun you?

"Some people would say. 'Mr. Sett and Mr. Burton made up their minds to start the Big Bend Ranch.' All right; perhaps they did, but let me give you an inside view of the factory.

"First off, Billy Quinn, Wind-River Smith, and me were putting up hay at the lake beds. It was a God-forsaken, lonesome job, to say the best of it, and we took to collecting pets, to make it seem a little more like home.

"Billy shot a hawk, breaking its wing. That was the first in the collection. He was a lovely pet. When you gave him a piece of meat he said 'Cree,' and clawed chunks out of you, but most of the time he sat in the corner with his chin on his chest, like a broken-down lawyer. We didn't get the affection we needed out of him. Well, then Wind-River found a bull-snake asleep and lugged him home, hanging over his shoulder. We sewed a flannel collar on the snake and picketed him out until he got used to the place. And around and around and around squirmed that snake

until we near got sick at our stummicks watching him. All day long, turning and turning and turning.

"'Darn it,' says I, 'I like more variety.' So that day, when I was cutting close to a timbered slew, out pops an old bob-cat and starts to open my shirt to see if I am her long-lost brother. By the time I got her strangled I had parted with most of my complexion. Served me right for being without a gun. The team run away as soon as I fell off the seat and I was booked to walk home. I heard a squeal from the bushes, and here comes a funny little cuss. I liked the look of him from the jump-off, even if his mother did claw delirious delight out of me. He balanced himself on his stubby legs and looked me square in the eye, and he spit and fought as though he weighed a ton when I picked him up—never had any notion of running away. Well, that was Robert—long for Bob.

"The style that cat spread on in the matter of growing was simply astonishing; he grew so's you could notice it overnight. At the end of two months he was that big he couldn't stand up under our sheet-iron cook-stove, and

this was about the beginning of our family troubles. Tommy, the snake, was a good deal of a nuisance from the time he settled down. You'd have a horrible dream in the night—be way down under something or other, gasping for wind, and, waking up, find Tommy nicely coiled on your chest. Then you'd slap Tommy on the floor like a section of large rubber hose. But he bore no malice. Soon's you got asleep he'd be right back again. When the weather got cool he was always under foot. He'd roll beneath you and land you on your scalp-lock, or you'd ketch your toe on him and get a dirty drop. I don't think I ever laughed more in my life than one day when Billy come in with an armful of wood, tripped on Tommy, and come down with a clatter right where Judge Jenkins, the hawk, could reach him. The Judge fastened one claw in Billy's hair and scratched his whiskers with the other. Gee! The hair and feathers flew! Bill had a hot temper and he went for the hawk like it was a man. The first thing he laid his hand on was Tommy, so he used the poor snake for a club. Wind-River and me were so weak from laughing that we near

Bob 'ud hop him

out; what he wanted of a saddle beyond the stirrups was a mystery, for he never touched it. He stood up on his stirrups, bent forward like he was going to bite the horse in the ear, soon's the strain got unendurable.

"Well, here he come, straight for us. I'd a mind to wake the other boys up, to let 'em see something new in the way of mishandling a horse, but they snored so peaceful I refrained.

"'How-de-do?' says he.

"I said I was worrying along, and sized him up, on the quiet. He was a queer pet. Not a bad set-up man, and rather good looking in the face. Light yellow hair, little yellow moustache, light blue eyes. And clean! Say, I never saw anybody that looked so aggravating clean in all my life. It seemed kind of wrong for him to be outdoors; all the prairie and the cabin and everything looked mussed up beside him.

"As soon as he opened up, I noticed he had a little habit of speaking in streaks, that bothered me. I missed the sense of his remarks.

"'Would you mind walking over that trail again?' I asked him. 'I do most of my think-

ing at a foot-step and your ideas is over the hill and far away before I can recognise the cut of their scalp-lock.'

"'Haw!' says he and stared at me. I was just on the point of askin' him if red hair was a new thing to him, when all of a sudden he begun to laugh, 'Haw-haw-haw!' says he; 'not bad at all, ye know.'

"'Of course not,' says I. 'Why should it be?'

"This got him going. I saw him figuring away to himself, and then I had to smile so you could hear it.

"'Well,' says I, better humoured, 'tell us it again—I caught the word sheep in the hurricane.'

"So he went over it, talking slow. I listened with one ear, for he had a white bull-dog with him; a husky, bandy-legged brute with a black eye, and he was sniffing, dog fashion, around the door, while I blocked him out with my legs. Doggy was in a frame of mind, puzzling out bull-snake trail, and hawk trail, and bob-cat trail. He foresaw much that was entertaining the other side of the door, and wanted it, powerful.

braying away on that breakfast horn for the last five minutes. Hustle!"

I found myself upon my hands and knees; in a cabin, all right, but the cabin was on the prairie. I looked around, stupid with sleep. The familiar sights met my eye—Oscar tip-toeing about, bow-legged, arms spread like wings, drawing his breath through his teeth, after the fashion of half-frozen people. Old Charley sat humped up in the corner, sucking his cob pipe. The stove was giving forth a smell of hot iron, and no heat, as usual. On it rested a wash-basin, wherein some snow was melting for the morning ablutions. A candle projected a sort of palpable yellow gloom into the grey icy morning air. I dressed rapidly. As I slept in overcoat and cap, this was no great matter. A pair of German socks and arctics completed my attire. Evidently I had been put upon the floor by the hand of Oscar. For this, when Oscar stretched his nether garment tight, in the act of washing his face, I smote him upon the fulness thereof with a long plug of chewing tobacco. "Aow!" he yelled, recurving like a bow and putting his hands to his wound.

Promptly we clinched and fell upon old Charley. To the floor the three went, amid a shower of sparks from the cob pipe. "You dam pesky kids!" said the angry voice of Charles (the timbre of that voice, after travelling through four inches of nose, is beyond imitation). "Get off'n me! Quit now! Stop yer blame foolin'!"

Oscar and I swallowed our giggles and rolled all over Charley. "*Well,* by Jeeroosha!" came from the bottom of the heap in the tone of one who has reached the breaking point of astonished fury. "I'm goin' to do some shootin' when this is over—yes, sir, I won't hold back no more—ef you boys don't git off'n me this minit, so help me Bob! I'll bite yer!"

This was a real danger, and we skipped off him briskly. "Why, Charley," explained Oscar, "you see, we got so excited that we didn't notice——"

"There's Steve now," interrupted Charley, pointing with a long crooked forefinger to the doorway. "Well, Steve! I'm glad you come. I just want you to see the kind of goin's on there is here." Charles cleared his throat and

Get off 'n me!

counter anything in this here country to produce such an effeck? For Gawd's sake, su', if there's anything in variety, a man livin' here orter lay holt of the grass roots, fur fear he'd git so durn strong he couldn't stay on the face of the yearth. Ef it ain't so sinful cold that yer ears'll drap off at a touch, it's so hell-fire hot that a man's features melt all over his face, and ef it ain't so solemn still that you're scart to death, the wind'll blow the buttonholes outer yer clo's'. I have seen it do a hull year-ful of stunts in twenty-four hours, encludin' hot an' cold weather, thunderstorms, drought, high water, and a blizzard. That settles the climate question. Then what is it that has let them holes go unchinked? I'll tell you, su'; it's nothin' more nor less than the tinkerin', triflin', pettifoggin' dispersition of them two boys. That's what makes it that there's mo' out-doors inside this bull-pen than there is on the top of Chunkey Smith's butte; that's what makes it I can't get up in the mornin' without having myself turned inter a three-ringed circus. But I ain't the man to complain. Ef there's anything that gums up the cards of life, it's a kicker; so jes' as one man to another, I

tells you what's wrong here and leaves you to figger it out fer yerself."

He glanced around on three grave faces with obvious satisfaction. His wrath had dissipated in the vapour of words. "Nor they ain't such bad boys, *as* boys, nuther," he concluded.

"I will examine this matter carefully, Charles," said Steve.

"I thank you, su'," responded Charley, with a courtly sweep of his hand.

"Not at all," insisted Steve, with a duplicate wave. "I beg that you won't mention it. And now, if you would travel toward the house——"

"*Cer*tainly!"

And out we went into North Dakota's congealed envelope, with the smoke from the main-house chimney rising three hundred feet into the air, a snow-white column straight as a mast, Charley stalking majestically ahead, while we three floundered weakly behind him.

"Ain't he the corker?" gasped Oscar. "When he gets to jumping sideways among those four-legged words he separates me from my good intentions."

"'With scorn and hoomiliation,'" quoted Steve, and stopped, overcome.

"'I tells you what's the matter and leaves you to figger it out for yourself,'" I added. Then Charley heard us. He turned and approached, an awful frown upon his brow.

"May I inquire what is the reason of this yere merriment?" he asked. The manner was that of a man who proposed to find out. It sat on Charley with so ludicrous a parody that we were further undone. Steve raised his hands in deprecation, and spoke in a muffled voice that broke at intervals.

"Can't I laugh in my own backyard, Charley?" he said. "By the Lord Harry, I *will* laugh inside my stakes! No man shall prevent me. The Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, and the Continental Congress give me the right. Now what have you got to say?"

"I dunno but what you have me whipsawed there, Steve," replied Charley, scratching his head. "Ef it's your right by the Constitootion, o' course I ain't goin' to object."

"Do either of you object?" demanded Steve of Oscar and me in his deepest bass.

No, we didn't object; we fell down in the snow and crowed like chanticleer.

"Hunh!" snorted Charley. "Hunh! Them boys hain't got brains in their heads at all—nothin' but doodle-bugs!"

"Well, Charley," continued Steve, "as you don't object, and they don't object, and I don't object, for God's sake let's have breakfast!"

"I'll go you, Steve," replied Charles seriously, and we entered the house uproarious.

There in the kitchen was Mrs. Steve and the "company," a pretty little bright-eyed thing, whose colour went and came at a word—more particularly if Oscar said the word. The affair was at present in the formal state—the dawn of realisation that two such wonderful and magnificent creatures as Oscar and Sally existed. But they were not Oscar and Sally except in the dear privacy of their souls. Yet how much that is not obvious to the careless ear can be put into "Will you have a buckwheat cake, Mr. Kendall?" or "May I give you a helping of the syrup, Miss Brown?" It took some preparation for each to get out

The affair was at present in the formal state

so simple a remark, and invariably the one addressed started guiltily, and got crimson. It was the most uncomfortable rapture I ever saw. However, they received very little plaguing. I can remember but one hard hit. Oscar was pouring syrup upon Sally's cakes, his eyes fixed upon a dainty hand, that shook under his gaze like a leaf. He forgot his business. Steve looked at the inverted, empty syrup-cup for some moments in silence. Then he said to his wife, "Emma, go and get Sally a nice cupful of fresh air to put on her cakes; that that Oscar has in the pitcher is stale by this time."

Oh, those cakes! And the ham! And the fried eggs and potatoes. We lived like fighting cocks at Steve's, as happens on most of the small ranches. The extreme glory of the prairie was not ours. We were wood-choppers, hay-cutters, and farmers, as well as punchers; but what we lost in romance, we made up in sustenance. No one ever saw a biscuit suffering from soda-jaundice on Steve's table. And how, after a night's sleep in a temperature of forty below zero, I would champ my teeth on the path to breakfast! Eat-

ing was not an appetite in those days—it was a passion.

Charley and I went forth after breakfast, Oscar lingering a moment, according to his use, to pass a painful five minutes in making excuses for staying that time, where no one needed any explanation.

"I wish to gracious Sally and Oscar would just act like people," said Mrs. Steve once in exasperation. "They get me so nervous stammering at each other that I drop everything I lay my hands on, and I feel as if I'd robbed somebody for the rest of the day."

The interview over, Oscar came out, burning with his own embarrassment, and made a sore mess of everything he did for the next hour. A man must have his mind about him on a ranch.

Once upon a time Steve came to Charley and me, literally prancing. We had heard oaths and yells and sounds of a battle royal previously, and wondered what was going on. When he neared us he moved slowly, his hands working like machinery. "I would like to know," he began, and stopped to glare at us and grind his teeth. "I should like to know,"

he continued, in a voice so weak with rage we could hardly hear it, "who turned the red bull into number three corral."

Charley and I went right on cleaning out the shed. We weren't going to tell on Oscar.

"So it's him again, heh?" shrieked Steve. "Well, now I propose to show him something. I'll show him everything!" He was entirely beyond the influence of reason and grammar. Charley had an ill-advised notion to play the paternal.

"Now, I'd cool down if I was you, Steve," he admonished.

"You would, would you!" foamed Steve. "Well, who the devil cares what you'd do, anyhow? And if you tell me to cool down just once more, I'll drive you into the ground like a tent-pin."

I jumped through the window, and then laughed, while Charley administered his reproof with appropriate gestures. His long arms flew in the air as he delivered the inspired address, Steve looking at him, a bit of shamefacedness and fun showing through his heat.

"An' mo' I tell you, Steven P. Hen-

dricks!" rolled out Charley in conclusion. "That this citizen of Texas, jus'ly and right-jus'ly called the Lone Star State, has never yet experienced the feeling of bein' daunted by face of man. No, su'! By God, su'!" He held the shovel aloft like a sword. "Let 'em come as they will, male and female after their kind, from a ninety poun' Jew peddler to Sittin' Bull himself, and from a pigeon-toed Digger-Injun squaw to a fo'-hundred-weight Dutch lady, I turn my back on none!"

"You win, Charley," said Steve, and walked off. All Oscar caught out of it was the request that when he felt like reducing the stock on the ranch he'd take a rifle.

Poor Oscar! All noble and heroic sentiments struggling within him, with no outlet but a hesitating advancing of the theory that "if we didn't get rain before long, the country'd be awful dry." Small wonder that he burst out in the bull-pen one night with "I wish the Injuns would jump this ranch!"

"You do?" said Charley. "Well, durn your hide for that wish! What's got into you to make you wish that?"

"Aw!" said Oscar, twitching around on

his stool, "I'm sick and tired of not being able to say anything. If the Sioux got up, I could do something."

"Oh, that's it," retorted Charles. "Well, Oscar, far's I can see, if it's necessary to have a war-party of Injuns whoopin' an' yellin' an' crow-hoppin' an' makin' fancywork out of people to give you the proper start afore your gal, it'd be jes' as well for you to stay single the res' of your days. The results wouldn't justify the trouble."

Afterward Oscar told me in private that Charley was an old stiff, and he didn't believe he'd make a chest at a grasshopper if the latter spunked up any. That wronged old Charley. But Oscar must be excused—he was a singularly unhappy man.

To come back to what happened. Oscar that morning had the care of Geronimo, a coal-black, man-eating stallion, a brute as utterly devoid of fear as of docility. A tiger kills to eat, and occasionally for the fun of it; that horse killed out of ferocity, and hate of every living thing.

A fearful beast is a bad horse. One really has more chance against a tiger. Geronimo

stood seventeen hands high, and weighed over sixteen hundred pounds. When he reared on his hind legs and came for you, screaming, his teeth snapping like bear-traps, his black mane flying, a man seemed a pigmy. One blow from those front hoofs and your troubles were over. Once down, he'd trample, bite, and kick until your own mother would hesitate to claim the pile of rags and jelly left. He had served two men so; nothing but his matchless beauty saved his life.

Nowhere could one find a better example of hell-beautiful than when he tore around his corral in a tantrum, as lithe and graceful as a black panther. His mane stood on end; his eyes and nostrils were of a colour; the muscles looked to be bursting through the silken gloom of his coat. His swiftness was something incredible. He caught and most horribly killed Jim Baxter's hound before the latter could get out of the corral—and a bear-hound is a pretty agile animal. We had to tie Jim, or he'd made an end of Geronimo. He left the ranch right after that. The loss of his dog broke him all up.

We fed and watered Geronimo with a pitch-

fork, and in terror then, for his slyness and cunning were on a par with his other pleasant peculiarities. One of the poor devils he killed entered the stable all unsuspecting. Geronimo had broken his chains, and stood close against the wall of his stall in the darkness, waiting. The man came within reach. Suddenly a black mass of flesh flashed in the air above him, coming down with all four hoofs—and that's enough of that story.

A nice pet was Geronimo. An excellent decoration for a gentleman's stable—stuffed.

Well, Oscar turned him out this morning, and then he, Steve, and I went for hay. As it was toward the last of winter, all the near stacks had been used up, and we had to haul from Kennedy's bottom, eight miles away. When we started, the air was still and frozen, with a deep, biting cold unusual to Dakota; the sort that searches you and steals all the heat you own. We were numb by the time we reached the stack, and glad enough to have warm work to do. We fell to it with a rush for that reason, and because a dull grey blink upon the western skyline seemed to promise a blizzard. We were tying down the last load,

when I heard the hum of wind coming, and looked up, expecting to see a wall of flying snow, and continued looking, seeing nothing of the kind. There I stood, in the air of an ice-house, when a gust of that wind struck me. A miracle! In a snap of your fingers I was bathed in genial warmth. All about me rode the scent of spring and flowers! It was as if the doors of a giant conservatory were thrown open.

"Chinook, boys! Chinook!" I called, casting down my fork. They ran from the lee of the stack, throwing their coats open, drinking it in and laughing, for, man! we were weary of winter! First it came in puffs, at length settling down to a steady breeze, as of the sea. The sun, that in the early morning was no more than a pale effigy, poured on us a heart-warming fire. We hustled for home, knowing that the Chinook would make short work of the snow. In fact, we had not covered more than half the distance before the prairie began to show brown here and there, where it lay thin between mountainous drifts. We sang and howled all the way to the sheds, feeling fine.

Here Steve left us, to go to the house, while Oscar and I unloaded the sleighs.

Suddenly I felt uncomfortable, for no reason in this world. The land about us was rejoicing with the booming of that kind, warm wind, yet a sharp uneasiness stopped me and forced me to raise my head. For three-quarters of a circle nothing met my eyes but the vanishing snow-drifts. I reached the house; nothing wrong there. Steve was walking briskly out toward us, smoking his pipe. Then the corrals—all right, number one, two, three, four—Lord have mercy!

"Oscar!" I shrieked, and snatched him to his feet. He rose, bewildered and half angry, then looked to where I pointed.

Through the centre of number four corral tripped Sally, dear little timid Sally, glad to be out in this lovely air, her eyes and mind on Oscar doubtless, and in the same corral, shut off from her sight by a projection of the sheds, stood Geronimo. And he saw her, too, for as she waved a hand to us, he bared his great teeth and clashed them together. The earth seemed to rock and sink from me. Every soul on the ranch was told to keep away from the

corral with the two buffalo skulls over the gates, a warning sufficiently big and gruesome to stop anyone. What fatal lapse of memory had struck the girl?

She was beyond help. We were all of two hundred yards away, and Steve still farther; she was not a quarter of that from the brute. If we shouted, if we moved, we might bring her end upon her—and such an end! When I thought of that dainty, pretty little woman beneath those hoofs, I felt a hideous sickness. The man beside me said, "My God! My mistake!" A corral opened on each side of the box stall in which Geronimo was confined. One of these was usually empty, a reserve. It was into this that Oscar had turned the horse. The other was the corral of the skulls.

Geronimo leaped out. The girl halted, stark, open-mouthed, every sign of life stricken from her at a blow. Geronimo sprang high and snapped at nothing, in evil play before the earnest. It was horrible. We could do neither harm nor good now, so we ran for the spot. It was down hill from us to them. I doubt that anything on two legs ever covered distance as we did, for all the despair.

Geronimo reared and stood upon his hind feet, as straight as a man. He advanced, striking, looming above his victim. "All over," I thought, and tried to take my eyes away. I could not.

At that instant a white-hatted, gaunt, tall figure rushed from the stable door, a shovel in its hand, straight between the girl and her destruction. There he stood, with his partly weapon raised, unflinching. An oath came to my lips and a hot spot to my throat at the sight. No eye ever saw a braver thing.

At this, a dip in the ground and the eight-foot fence of the corral shut out all within. God knows how we got over that fence. I swear I think we leaped it. I have no memory of climbing, but I do recall landing on the other side in a swoop.

Geronimo had old Charley in his teeth, shaking him like a rat.

"Steve!" I called, "Steve!" And then Oscar and I charged at the wicked brute with our pitchforks. All that followed is a tangled, bad dream of hurry, fear, yells, oaths, and myself stabbing, stabbing, stabbing with the pitchfork. Then a gun cracked somewhere, a

black mass toppled toward me that knocked me sprawling—and all was still. I sat for a moment, smiling foolishly and fumbling for my hat. Steve raised me by the arm. He still had his revolver in his hand, and his glance on the dead stallion. He asked me if I was hurt, and I said yes. He asked me where, and I said that made no difference. Then, as I came to a little more, I said I guessed I wasn't hurt, and looked around. Oscar had Sally in his arms. The tears were running down his cheeks, and he moved his head from side to side, like a man in agony. Her head was buried in his breast, her hands locked around his neck. It was well with them, evidently. But limp upon the ground, his forehead varnished red, lay old Charley.

We turned him over tenderly, wiping the blood away. Steve's lips quivered as he put his hand on the old man's heart. He kept it there a long time. Then he said huskily, "He's gone!" At the words the sound eye of the victim popped open with a suddenness that made my heart throw a somersault. It was as sane, calm, and undisturbed an optic as ever regarded the world.

"G-a-w-n H—l!" said Charley.

We laughed and wiped our eyes with our coat sleeves, and got the old boy to his feet.

"Same old Texas," said he, feeling of his head (the hoof had scraped, instead of smashing), "slightly disfiggered, but still in the ring."

He caught sight of the lovers. "Hello!" he said. "Oscar's made his ante good at last —bad hawse works as well as Injuns." We started to lead him by the pair.

"Naw, boys," he commanded. "Take me 'round 't'uther way. That gal don't want to see me now, all bloody and mussed up like this."

It was useless to attempt making a hero of Charley.

Billy the Buck

I FANCY I assume an impregnable position in saying that real poetry is truth, presented in its most vivid and concise form. If the statement stands, I request that every line of English verse containing the words "Timid deer," or referring in any way to a presumed gentle, trusting, philanthropic disposition in the beast, be at once revised or expurgated. I shall not except the works of William Shakespeare. When the melancholy Jaques speaks of one of these ferocious animals, saying, "The big round tears coursed one another down his innocent nose in piteous chase," I believe Jaques lied; or, if he lied not, and the phenomenon occurred as reported, that the tears were tears of rage because the deer could not get at Jaques, and as an extension, if he had gotten at Jaques, he would have given said Jaques some cold facts to be contemplative about. After my experience, if I should see any misguided person making friendly advances to one of these

horned demons, I should cry, "Whoa!" as Cassandra did to the wood horse of the Greeks, and probably with the same result. They would not falter until they had gathered bitter experience with their own hands.

Why? This is why. One day, when I was working on a Dakota ranch, the boss, a person by the name of Steve, urged me to take an axe, go forth, and chop a little wood, which I did.

The weather was ideal. A Dakota fall. Air vital with the mingled pleasant touch of frost and sun, like ice-cream in hot coffee, and still as silence itself. I had a good breakfast, was in excellent health and spirits; the boss could by no means approach within a mile unperceived, and everything pointed to a pleasant day. But, alas! as the Copper-lined Killelubird of the Rockies sings, "Man's hopes rise with the celerity and vigour of the hind leg of the mule, only to descend with the velocity of a stout gentleman on a banana peel."

On reaching the grove of cottonwoods I sat down for a smoke and a speculative view of things in general, having learned at my then early age that philosophy is never of more

value than when one should be doing something else.

I heard a noise behind me, a peculiar noise, between a snort and a violent bleat. Turning, I saw a buck deer, and, from the cord and bell around his neck, recognised him as one Billy, the property of Steve's eldest boy. He was spoken of as a pet.

This was the touch needed to complete my Arcadia; the injection of what, at the time, I considered to be poetry into the excellent prose of open air life. Who could see that graceful, pretty creature, and remain unmoved? Not I, at all events. I fancied myself as a knight of old in the royal forest, which gave a touch of the archaic to my speech. "Come here, thou sweet-eyed forest child!" I cried, and here he came! At an estimate I should say that he was four axe-handles, or about twelve feet high, as he upended himself, brandished his antlers, and jumped me. My axe was at a distance. I moved. I played knight to king's bishop's eighth, in this case represented by a fork of the nearest tree. A wise and subtle piece of strategy, as it resulted in a drawn game.

"A wise and subtle piece of strategy"

My friend stood erect for a while, making warlike passes with his front feet (which, by the way, are as formidable weapons as a man would care to have opposed to him); then, seeing that there was no sporting blood in me, he devoured my lunch and went away—a course I promptly imitated as far as I could; I departed.

Hitherto, I had both liked and admired Steve. His enormous strength, coupled with an unexpected agility and an agreeable way he had of treating you as if you were quite his own age, endeared him to me. When I poured out my troubles to him, however, rebuking him for allowing such a savage beast to be at large, he caused my feelings to undergo a change. For, instead of sympathising, he fell to uproarious laughter, slapped his leg, and swore that it was the best thing he'd ever heard of, and wished he'd been there to see it.

I concluded, judicially, that Steve had virtues, but that he was at the last merely a very big man of coarse fibre. Perhaps I *had* been a little boastful previously concerning my behaviour under trying circumstances. If so, I was well paid out for it. That night I had the

pleasure of listening to an account of my adventures, spiced with facetious novelties of

"An account of my adventures"

Steve's invention, such as that my cries for help were audible to the house, and only the

fact that he couldn't tell from which direction they came prevented Steve from rushing to my rescue, and that all the deer wanted was my lunch, anyhow. I wished I had kept the lunch episode to myself.

There are probably no worse teases on earth than the big boys who chase the cow on the Western prairies. They had "a horse on the kid," and the poor kid felt nightmare ridden indeed. If I were out with them, someone would assume an anxious look and carefully scout around a bunch of grass in the distance, explaining to the rest that there might be a deer concealed there, and one could not be too careful when there were wild beasts like that around. Then the giggling rascals would pass the suspected spot with infinite caution, perhaps breaking into a gallop, with frightened shrieks of "The deer! The deer!" while I tried to look as if I liked it, and strove manfully to keep the brine of mortification from rolling down my cheeks.

I didn't let my emotions take the form of words, because I had wit enough to know that I could not put a better barrier between myself and a real danger than those husky lads of the

leather breeches and white hats. For all that, I had a yearning to see one of them encounter the deer at his worst. I did not wish anyone hurt, and was so confident of their physical ability that I did not think anyone would be; but I felt that such an incident would strengthen their understanding.

This thing came to pass, and, of all people, on my arch-enemy, Steve. If I had had the arrangement of details, I could not have planned it better. Because of my tender years, the light chores of the ranch fell to my share. One day everyone was off, leaving me to chink up the "bull-pen," or men's quarters, with mud, against the cold of approaching winter. Steve had taken his eldest boy on a trip to pick out some good wood.

Presently arrived the boy, hatless, running as fast as he could tear, the breath whistling in his lungs. "Come *quick!*" was the message. It seems the deer had followed the couple, and when the boy fooled with his old playmate, the deer knocked him down and would have hurt him badly, but that his father instantly jumped into the fray and grabbed the animal by the horns, with the intention of

twisting his head off. The head was fastened on more firmly than Steve supposed. What he did not take at all into account was that the buck was both larger and stronger than he. Though raised on a bottle, Billy was by long odds the largest deer I ever saw.

Steve got the surprise of his life. The battle was all against him. The best he could hope to do was to hold his own until help arrived; so he sent the boy off hotfoot. Although his power for a short exertion was great, Steve was in no kind of training, having allowed himself to fatten up, and being an inordinate user of tobacco. Per contra, the deer felt freshened and invigorated by exertion. That's the deuce of it with an animal—*he* doesn't tire.

I knew that Steve was in plenty trouble, or he wouldn't have sent for help. The boy's distress denied the joke I suspected; I grabbed a rope and made for the grove, the boy trailing me. I should have gotten a gun, but I didn't think of it.

Those were the days when I could run; when it was exhilaration to sail over the prairie. The importance of my position as

rescuer—which anyone who has been a boy will understand—lent springs to my feet.

It was well for Steve that mine were speedy legs. When I got there his face was grey and mottled, like an old man's, and his mouth had a weak droop, very unlike devil-may-care Steve. The two had pawed up the ground for rods around in the fight; the deer's horns, beneath where the man gripped them, were wet with the blood of his torn palms. Steve's knees, arms, and head were trembling as if in an ague fit. He was all in—physically; but the inner man arose strong above defeat. "Here's—your—deer—Kid!" he gasped. "I—kept—him—for you!"

I yelled to him to hold hard for one second, took a running jump, and landed on Mr. Buck's flank with both feet. It was something of a shock. Over went deer, man, and boy. I was on my pins in a jiffy, snapped the noose over the deer's hind legs, tangled him up anyhow in the rest of the riata, and snubbed him to the nearest tree. Then Steve got up and walked away to where he could be ill with comfort. And he was good and sick.

When he felt better, he arose and opened

"'Here's—your—deer—Kid,' he gasped"

his knife, swearing that he would slit that critter's throat from ear to ear; but Steve, junior, plead so hard for the life of his pet that Big Steve relented, and Mr. Billy Buck was saved for further mischief.

That afternoon two of us rode out and roped him, "spreading" him between us as we dragged him home. He fought every step of the way. My companion, a hot-headed Montana boy, was for killing him a half-dozen times. However, feeling that the deer had vindicated me, I had a pride in him, and kept him from a timely end. We turned him loose in a corral with a blooded bull-calf, some milch cows, work-steers, and other tame animals. "And I bet you he has 'em all chewing the rag inside of twenty-four hours," said my companion.

That night Steve made ample amend for his former mirth. Indeed, he praised my fleetness and promptness of action so highly that I was seized by an access of modesty as unexpected as it was disorganising.

The next day Steve stood on the roof of the shed at the end of Billy Buck's corral. Suddenly he straightened up and waved his hat.

"Deer and bull fight!" he called. "Come a-running everybody!" We dropped our labours and sprinted for the corral, there to sit upon the shed and watch the combat. Steve didn't know what began the trouble, but when I got there the young bull was facing the deer, his head down, blowing the dust in twin clouds before him, hooking the dirt over his back in regular fighting bull fashion, and anon saying, "Bh-ur-ur-ooor!" in an adolescent basso-profundo, most ridiculously broken by streaks of soprano. When these shrill notes occurred the little bull rolled his eyes around, as much as to say "Who did that?" and we, swinging our legs on the shed roof, laughed gleefully and encouraged him to sail in.

His opponent watched this performance with a carriage of the head which, for superciliousness, I never have seen equaled in man, woman, or beast. His war-cry was a tinny bleat: the cry of a soul bursting with sardonic merriment. It was like the Falstaffian laughter of the duck, without its ring of honesty.

The bull, having gone through the preliminaries of his code, cocked his tail straight in the air and charged. The buck waited until

he was within three feet; then he shot sideways, and shot back again, his antlers beating with a drum-stick sound on the bull's ribs. "Baw-aw!" said the bull. Probably that hurt. Again bull faced buck. This time the bovine eye wore a look of troubled wonderment, while one could mark an evil grin beneath the twitching nose of his antagonist; and his bleat had changed to a tone which recalled the pointing finger and unwritable "H'nh-ha!" that greets misfortune in childhood. "I told you so!" it said. The bull, however, is an animal not easily discouraged. Once more he lowered his foolish head and braved forth like a locomotive.

But it would take too long to tell all the things Billy Buck did to that bull. He simply walked all over him and jabbed and raked and poked. Away went the bull, his erstwhile proudly erect tail slewed sideways, in token of struck colours—a sign of surrender disregarded by his enemy, who thought the giving of signals to cease fighting a prerogative of his office. Away went the old cows and the work-steers and the horses, in a thundering circuit of the corral, the horned stock bawling in ter-

ror, and Billy Buck "boosting" every one of them impartially. We cheered him.

"Gad! I'm glad I didn't slit his windpipe!" said Steve. "He's a corker!"

Billy drove his circus parade around about six times before his proud soul was satisfied. Then he took the centre of the ring, and bellowed a chant of victory in a fuller voice than he had given before, while the other brutes, gathered by the fence, looked at him in stupefaction.

Only once more did Billy Buck figure in history before he left us for a larger field in town, and on this occasion, for the first and last time in his career, he got the worst of it.

A lone Injun came to the ranch—a very tall, grave man, clad in comic-picture clothes. A battered high hat surmounted his block of midnight hair, and a cutaway coat, built for a man much smaller around the chest, held his torso in bondage. As it was warm on the day he arrived, he had discarded his trousers—a breech-clout was plenty leg-gear, he thought. He bore a letter of recommendation from a white friend.

"Plenty good letter—*leela ouashtay ota,*"

"Jimmy-hit-the-bottle"

the answer of an echo. It was a day for great deeds, such as were enacted before us; steel-strung frame pitted against steel-strung frame; bottomless endurance against its equal. And never were such jumpings, such prancings, such wild wavings of legs beheld by human eyes before. You cannot beat it into people's heads that the horned critters are the lords of brute creation; yet it is the fact. A bull chased a lion all around the ring in the arena in Mexico, finally killing him with one blow. In Italy they shut a buck deer and a tiger in a cage. There was a brief skirmish, and the tiger slunk to the corner of the cage, howling.

Splendid was the exhibition of strength and agility we looked upon, but, alas! its poetry was ripped up the back by the cutaway coat, the plug hat, and the unrelated effect of those long, bare red legs twinkling beneath.

Indirectly it was the plug hat that ended the battle. At first, if Jimmy-hit-the-bottle felt any emotion, whether joy, resentment, terror, or anything man can feel, his face did not show it. One of the strangest features of the show was that immaculately calm face

suddenly appearing through the dust-clouds, unconscious of storm and stress. At last, however, a yank of the deer's head—Jimmy had him by the horns—caused the plug hat to snap off, and the next second the deer's sharp foot went through it. You will remember Achilles did not get excited until his helmet touched the dust. Well, from what the cold, pale light of fact shows of the size and prowess of those ancient swaggerers, Jimmy-hit-the-bottle could have picked Achilles up by his vulnerable heel and bumped his brains out against a tree, and this without strain; so when the pride of his life, his precious plug hat, was thus maltreated, his rage was vast in proportion. His eyes shot streaks of black lightning; he twisted the deer's head sideways, and with a leap landed on his back. Once there, he seized an ear between his strong teeth and shut down. We rose to our feet and yelled. It was wonderful, but chaotic. I would defy a moving-picture camera to resolve that tornado into its elements of deer and Injun. We were conscious of curious illusions, such as a deer with a dozen heads growing out of all parts of a body as spherical as

this, our earth, and an Injun with legs that vetoed all laws of gravitation and anatomy.

Poor Billy Buck! He outdid the wildest of our pitching horses for a half minute; but the two hundred and odd pounds he had on his back told—he couldn't hold the gait. Jimmy wrapped those long legs around him—the deer's tail in one hand, the horn in the other, and the ear between his teeth—and waited in grim determination. "Me-ah-a-aaaa!" said the deer, dropping to his knees.

Jimmy got off him. Billy picked himself up and scampered to the other end of the corral, shaking his head.

The Injun straightened himself up, making an effort to draw a veil of modesty over the pride that shone in his eyes.

"H-nh!" he said. "Fool deer tackle Tatonka Sutah!" ("Tatonka-Sutah," or Strong Bull, was the more poetic title of Jimmy-hit-the-bottle among his own kind.)

He then gravely punched his plug hat into some kind of shape and resumed his work.

We pitched in and bought Jimmy a shiny new plug hat which—which will lead me far afield if I don't drop the subject.

Well, he was master of Mr. Billy Buck. When he entered the corral, the deer stepped rapidly up to the farther corner and stayed there.

Now came the broadening of Billy's career. A certain man in our nearest town kept a hotel near the railroad depot. For the benefit of the passengers who had to stop there a half-hour for meals and recreation, this man had a sort of menagerie of the animals natural to the country. There was a bear, a mountain lion, several coyotes, swifts, antelope, deer, and a big timber wolf, all in a wire net-enclosed park.

It so happened that Steve met Mr. D——, the hotel proprietor, on one of his trips to town, and told him what a splendid deer he had out at the ranch. Mr. D—— became instantly possessed of a desire to own the marvel, and a bargain was concluded on the spot. Billy by this time had shed his horns, and was all that could be wished for in the way of amiability. We tied his legs together, and shipped him to town in a waggon.

Steve did not trick Mr. D——. He told him plainly that the deer was a dangerous cus-

tomer, and that to be careful was to retain a whole skin; but the hotel proprietor, a little, fat, pompous man with a big bass voice—the kind of a man who could have made the world in three days and rested from the fourth to the seventh, inclusive, had it been necessary—thought he knew something of the deer character. "That beautiful creature, with its mild eyes and humble mien, hurt anyone? Nonsense!" So he had a fine collar made for Billy, with his name on a silver plate, and then led him around town at the end of a chain, being a vain little man, who liked to attract attention by any available means. All worked well until the next fall. Mr. D—— was lulled into false security by the docility of his pet, and allowed him the freedom of the city, regardless of protest. Then came the spectacular end of Billy's easy life. It occurred on another warm autumn day. The passengers of the noon train from the East were assembled in the hotel dining-room, putting away supplies as fast as possible, the train being late. The room was crowded; the darkey waiters rushing; Mr. D—— swelling with importance. Billy entered the room un-

noticed in the general hurry. A negro waiter passed him, holding two loaded trays. Perhaps he brushed against Billy; perhaps Billy didn't even need a provocation; at any rate, as the waiter started down the room, Billy smote him from behind, and dinner was served!

When the two tray-loads of hot coffee, potatoes, soup, chicken, and the rest of the bill of fare landed all over the nearest table of guests, there was a commotion. Men leaped to their feet with words that showed they were no gentlemen, making frantic efforts to wipe away the scalding liquids trickling over them. The ladies shrieked and were tearful over the ruin of their pretty gowns. Mr. D——, on the spot instantly, quieted his guests as best he could on the one hand, and berated the waiter for a clumsy, club-footed baboon on the other. Explanation was difficult, if not impossible. Arms flew, hard words flew; the male guests were not backward in adding their say. Then, even as I had been before, the coloured man was vindicated. Suddenly two women and a man sprang on top of the table and yelled for help. Mr. D—— looked upon them open-mouthed. The three on top of the table

clutched one another, and howled in unison. Mr. D——'s eye fell on Billy, crest up, warlike in demeanour, and also on a well-dressed man backing rapidly under the table.

A flash of understanding illumined Mr. D——. The deer, evidently, felt a little playful; but it would never do, under the circumstances. "Come here, sir!" he commanded. Billy only lived to obey such a command, as I have shown. But this time Mr. D—— recognised a difference, and went about like a crack yacht. He had intentions of reaching the door. Billy cut off retreat. Mr. D—— thought of the well-dressed man, and dived under the table. Those who had stood uncertain, seeing this line of action taken by one who knew the customs of the country, promptly imitated him. The passengers of the Eastern express were ensconced under the tables, with the exception of a handful who had preferred getting on top of them.

Outside, three cow punchers, who chanced to be riding by, were perfectly astonished by the noises that came from that hotel. They dismounted and investigated. When they saw the feet projecting from beneath the cloths,

and the groups in statuesque poses above, they concluded not to interfere, although strongly urged by the victims. "You are cowards!"

The punchers to the rescue

cried the man with the two women. The punchers joyfully acquiesced, and said, "Sick 'em, boy!" to the deer.

Meanwhile, the express and the United States mail were waiting. The conductor, watch in hand, strode up and down the platform.

"What do you suppose they're doing over there?" he asked his brakeman.

The brakeman shrugged his shoulders. "Ask them punchers," he replied.

The conductor lifted his voice. "What's the matter?" he called.

"Oh, come and see! Come and see!" said the punchers. "It's too good to tell."

The conductor shut his watch with a snap.

"Five minutes late," he said. "Pete, go and hustle them people over here. I start in three minutes by the watch."

"Sure," said Pete, and slouched across. Pete was surprised at the sight that met his gaze, but orders were orders. He walked up and kicked Billy, at the same time shouting "All aboard for the West! Git a wiggle on yer!"

The man owed his life to the fact that the deer could get no foothold on the slippery hardwood floor. As it was, Billy tried to push, and his feet shot out; man and deer

came to the floor together, the brakeman holding hard. The passengers boiled out of the hotel like a mountain torrent. The punchers, thinking the brakeman in danger, sprang through the window and tied the deer. Pete gasped his thanks and hustled out. No one was left but Billy, the punchers, the darkey waiters, and Mr. D——.

"This your deer?" inquired the punchers of the latter.

"It is," said Mr. D——. "Take him out and hang him—don't shoot him—hang him!"

"All right," replied the punchers. They took Billy out and turned him loose in the deer-pen.

"Reckon the old man'll feel better about it to-morrow," they said.

And it came to pass that the old man did feel better; so Billy was spared. Perhaps if you have travelled to the West you have seen him—a noble representative of his kind. Well, this is his private history which his looks belie.

The Demon in the Canon

"I know not where the truth may be;
I tell the tale as 'twas told to me."
(Probable misquotation of old couplet.)

THERE was once an earnest missionary who went to the trouble of learning the Sioux language, in order to be of more use in his chosen field. He spoke it with a strong Boston accent. One day he laboured with a big Uncapapa brave long and eagerly. The Injun listened to all he had to say. When at great length silence fell, the Redman spoke.

"Have you any tobacco?" said he.

"Why, no!" returned the missionary.

"Hungh! So long!" said the Injun, and rode away on a trot.

Now, there may be those who will object that the plain, unvarnished tale of my friend "Hy" Smith, which follows, is lacking in the robust qualities that truth alone can bring; to them I recommend the attitude of the In-

"Hy" Smith

jun. But I must add this: Heaven forbid that I should have to stand good for any of Hy's stories! Still, some of what I considered his most outrageous lies afterward received strong and unexpected confirmation. For instance, the manner in which he earned his sobriquet of "Hydraulic" Smith I thought was pure fable, but no less a man than his former employer said that it was fact in every essential. Smith got his front name while working in a big hydraulic camp in Idaho. He was nozzleman. One day in an unusually merry mood he turned the monitor loose on a crowd of Chinamen who were working over tailings.

"And if ever you saw felt shoes and pigtails flying in the air 'twas then," said Hy. "It looked for all the world like Old Faithful had spouted in a poll-parrot cage. I don't know why I done it, no more than the man in the moon—it was one of them idees that takes hold of you, and gets put through before you can more'n realise you're thinking of it—but it was the greatest success of its kind I ever see. We had a two-hundred-foot head of water and a six-inch stream, and I might say

that there was a yaller haze of Chinamen in the atmosphere for the next ten seconds. I piped one Charley-boy right over the top of a tool-shed. Well, our boss was a mighty kind-hearted man, and when that crowd of spitting, foaming, gargling, gobbling Chinamen went to him, and begun to pour out their troubles like several packs of fire-crackers going off to oncet, waving all the arms and legs I hadn't knocked out of commission, he was het up considerable. He never waited to hear my side of the story, but just rolled up his pants and waded into me up to the hocks; he read me my pedigree from Adam's wife's sister down to now, and there wasn't a respectable person in it, according to him.

"I didn't like it, and I made a swipe for him with a shovel, but he was too soople for for me, and of all the lickings I ever got, that is the one I don't want to remember the most: he did a sort of double-shuffle fandango on my back, while he brought my legs into the argument with a sluice rake.

"When he asked me if I had had enough, I told him I thought it would do for the present, because, as a matter of fact, if all I had

more than enough was money in the bank, I wouldn't have done no more work for the rest of my days.

"So then he calls me up and gives me my time, and I must say he treated me square when he said good-bye.

"'You're the best darn man on a monitor lever that I ever did see,' says he, 'but anywheres else you're the foolest combine of small boy and dare-devil, and some other queer thing that I don't seem to be able to find a name for, that ever cumbered this earth. Now, get the —— out of this, and good luck to you.'

"I didn't feel a bit sorry for them Chinamen—they're only hairless monkeys that don't even know enough to wear their tails in the right place. Their arithmetic proves that. It's regular monkey figgering. They haven't any numbers that look like numbers at all. Suppose you want to multipy twenty-five by thirty-six, Chinee system? First you put down a rooster's foot-track; that's twenty-five. Underneath that goes the ground-plan of a small house; that's thirty-six. Then you take an hour off, and work out the sum with a lot

of little balls on wires; then you put down the answer, and what do you think it is? Why, it's a map of Chicago after the fire! Shucks! And they call themselves men. I'd go old Job three boils to his one rather than have any Chinks around me.

"Well, the boys labelled me Hydraulic Smith from that on, and I went prospecting. Took up with a feller named Agamemnon G. Jones. Aggy was a big, fine-looking man, with a chest like a dry-goods box, and a set of whiskers that would start him in business anywhere. They were the upstandingest, noblest, straightforwardest outfit of whiskers I most ever saw, and how they come to grow on Ag is a mystery; but they stood him in many a dollar, now, I tell you that!

"He was a man of pretty considerable education, in some ways, and he could make you believe that to-day was last Thursday a week ago, if you weren't on to him. At this time he was kind of under a cloud like myself, and the way it come about was this:

"He started an assay office when he first struck the gulch, and he used to bring in results according to the looks of the customer.

If the man looked tender around the feet, Aggy'd knock it to him, and probably the shave-tail would be so pleased that he would fork out an extra ten; but if he was plainly vented as one of the boys, there would be just enough pay in the return to encourage him. Now, Jones did everything shipshape and in style. Here's the paper that made him trouble."

Hy fished a slip out of the bundle in his old pocket-book and handed it to me.

AGAMEMNON G. JONES, *Assayer*,
Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis.

Sample left by Mr. Idaho Kid. *No. 36,943.*

	Value per ton.
Gold	$362.13
Silver	186.90
Platinum	14.77
Lead	2.06
Iridium	.02
Osmium	.00003+
Copper	18.54

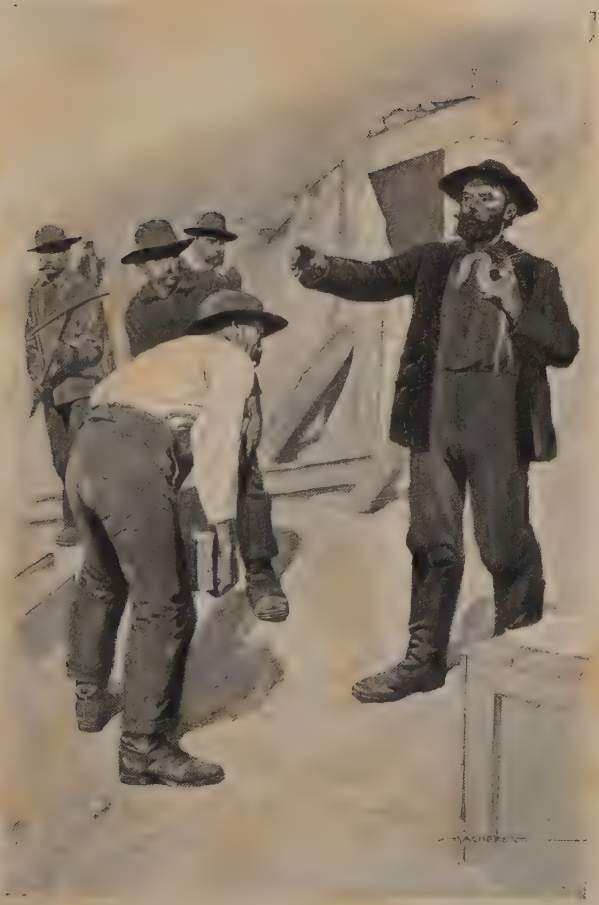
10:36 A.M. 3/16/81

Signed, AGAMEMNON G. JONES,
Assayer.

"Now, that was the worst that Aggy had ever sprung on anybody, because this Idaho Kid looked as if he hadn't been three weeks

away from his mother; instead of which he was a hootin', tootin' son-of-a-gun in reality, and you might say he'd cut his teeth on a miner's candlestick.

"When the Kid saw that miraculous result, his eyes bunged out; then he took a long breath and wrecked the place. Aggy left at one that morning for fear that worse might follow. He fetched this paper with him to remind him that 'genius has its limitations,' he said. But he didn't seem to learn anything by it. Next he took up engineering. He hit a blame good job on Castle Creek. The people wanted to turn the creek through a tunnel, so that they could work the bed, and at this point it was rather an easy business. The stream made a 'U' about three-quarters of a mile long, the bottom prong being at least a hundred and fifty feet below the water-level on the top one—a smashing good fall—so Aggy started in on the down side to bore the hole up. Well, everything went lovely. He'd come around with his plans and specifications twice a day, and draw his hundred once a week regular for his great labours. At last, however, the shift-boss said



He'd come around with his plans and specifications twice a day

they must be getting pretty near water; he could hear it roar through the face of the tunnel, he said. But Aggy told him not to be alarmed; he had it all worked out, and they weren't within forty foot of breaking through.

"So at it they went again, as cheerful as could be, and the next news they got, down comes the face, and they were being piped through four hundred foot of black-dark tunnel, trying to guess what was up, bumping and banging against the walls, and the whole of Castle Creek on top of them. My, Chinamen weren't a circumstance. Aggy said they boiled out of the lower end of the tunnel where he was standing so fast he couldn't recognise them, and, as a matter of fact, three or four of 'em were washed a mile down creek before they could make land. Aggy gathered that it was time to move again, so he pulled back for Idaho. There wasn't anybody really drowned, except old Tom Olley, a cousin-Jack whose only amusement in life was to wear out his pants laying low for cinches in the stud-poker game, and you couldn't rightly say he was any loss to the community. So Aggy

used to regret sometimes that he hadn't stayed to face the music. They might have played horse with him for a while, but 'twould soon have blown over—miners not being revengeful by nature—and he was to have had an eighth interest, besides his salary, if the thing was a success.

"But there was no good of crying over spilt milk, and us two went prospecting.

"We located for a permanent stand down on Frenchman's Creek, near where three of Cap' Ally's greaser sheep herders had their camp. They did our hunting for us, and as there was nobody but them around, and they were the peacefullest people in the world, we didn't feel the need of any gun except Ag's old six-shooter. That was the cussedest machine that ever got invented by man. When you pulled her off she'd spit fire in all directions, filling the crotch of your hand with powder burns, and sometimes two or three of the loads would go off at once, when she'd kick like a Texas steer. There was much talk of bear around, and we were always going to buy a real gun, some day, but we never got at it.

"Well, we prospered pretty well, considering how little we worked. A large part of the time was taken up with playing monte with the herders, and still more in arguing questions about religion and things like that; but we had a decent cabin built—with the kind assistance of the herders—and as we struck a rich little streak that run out ten dollars per man a day with no trouble at all, we were in clover.

"At last our stock of grub ran low, and Jones slid up to Salmon City to load up again. It was quite a trip, and as I didn't think it was square to work while Aggy was away, I took up with the herders. They were the decentest folks I ever struck. Play a little music on the guitar, sing songs that always wound up just where a white man's songs would begin, and tell stories and smoke cigarettes—that was the layout for them. Old Cap' Allys was a Christian, and he wouldn't let a man herd sheep all by himself—surest way to get crazy that ever was invented—so he sent the boys out three in a bunch.

"Those fellers had the darndest lot of fairy tales I ever did hear. And superstitious!

Great Jupiter! Any little blame thing that happened meant something: this thing was good luck; that meant bad, and if you tried to josh them out of it, they'd shake their heads and look at you as if they thought you weren't truly religious. One of their yarns was about El Diablo de Fuego, 'The Devil of Fire,' which Miguel said ran in his family. Seems that when anything wrong was about to happen, this blazing, ripping monster showed up as a warning. I told Mee that I thought the monster was misfortune enough, without anything else, but he was scandalised.

"'Psst!' says he. 'Do not spik sooch t'eeng as dthat! Ay, di mi! Jé-Maria-mi Cristo! Jésu, muy dolce y poquito! Dhat mek heem arrrrrrive dthat eenstant, eef djoo spik weez dees-rrreespeck!'

"'All right, Mee,' says I. 'We'll let her go at that—todo el mismo por mi, sabe? But how's the bear crop?'

"'Ay, cara! Is plenty goddam ba-are!' says Pepe. 'Keel three—four ship las' nigh'! That mek that two mus' seet oop for watch, an' alll ship mus' be in close-corrrrallll! I speet on the soul of that ba-are!'

"Gad! that wasn't cheerful news a little bit. If there's anything in this world I more than don't like, it's a bear—he's so darn big and strong and unreasonable, and unless you catch him sitting, you can pump lead into him until you're black in the face, and it's all one to him. Well, I thought I might as well camp with the herders until Aggy came back.

"When he did show up he was rather under the influence of strong drink, and from the looks of the waggon he'd brought with him, I should say he'd bought about everything that was movable in Salmon City. I ain't easily astonished, but I must admit that some of the truck got the best of me. I kept asking, 'What in —— is this, Ag?' and he always answered, 'Ask the driver.' Well, now, if there was any choice between the two, the driver was drunker than Aggy, so you can imagine what a lot of satisfaction I got. There was one thing that I simply couldn't make head nor tail of, and I stayed with him until I got an answer on that.

"'Why, it's an alcohol cooking-stove,' said he, 'great medicine—no trouble to cook

now at all. Just light her,' says he, waving his hand, 'and whoop! away she goes! Where's that can of alcohol? Here she is! Have a drink, Hy?'

"I took a small swig of it in a little water to please him, but there weren't stimmilants enough in the country to raise my spirits that night. I put all the plunder that I could lift up in the cock-loft, and the rest I left sitting around.

"I don't exactly know where you fellers are going to sleep,' says I, trying to be sourcastic. 'Pity you didn't order a folding-bed, Ag.'

"'I did,' says he.

"'A folding-bed?' I repeats, not believing my ears.

"'And a piano,' says he. 'What is home without a piano? Answer: It's a place that can't hold the forte—dam good joke—keno—go up to the head, Jones.'

"'Well, says I, after some other things, 'who's going to pay for all this?'

"'God knows!' says he, waving his hand again. 'Good-night!' and with that he fell down between a new bureau and a patent

portable blacksmith's forge, and putting his head on a concertina, went sound asleep.

"I couldn't follow suit for some time; it's one thing to come home full of budge and animal spirits yourself, and it's quite different to have your pardner work it on you. At last, however, I concluded it would be all the same the next century, and turned in, but I was so rattled that I forgot the bears, and didn't lock up with the usual care.

"It must have been about two in the morning when I woke all in a tremble. I had the feeling that things were away off, but I couldn't place what was the matter, until I looked at the square of moonlight on the floor that came through the window, and I was near to screech like a tomcat, for there was a monstrous black shadow bobbing back and forth in the patch of light. I drew on my bank for all the sand I had and raised my eyes. My heart fairly knocked my ribs loose. Nicely framed in the window was the head of a grizzly, and I'll take my oath it wasn't over a size smaller than a beer-barrel!

"'Now,' thinks I, 'if I can only get that gun before he sees me, and if the cussed thing

will only do the right thing by me this once!'

"So out I steps, and the first rattle out of the box I stumbled on a few dozen of the purchases Ag had brought home, and down them and me came like an earthquake. It scart the bear so he drew back; no use trying to work a sneak now. I jumped for the holster, unlimbered, and turned the gun loose for general results. I guess every load went off, from the noise, and she flew out of my hand and vanished behind me. The place was full of smoke and the plunder that was scattered around; you could neither see nor walk, and that bear was swatting the door in a fashion that showed he was going to give us a call any old how, and I was plumb distracted—for the life of me I didn't know what to do.

"'Don't make such a damn noise!' growls Aggy.

"'You'd better get out of that!' I yells. 'You'll get noise enough in a minute!' But he didn't pay the least attention.

"Just before the door went down I broke for the cock-loft; it was the only spot that seemed to hold the teeniest bit of safety. I

clim up the wall like a hopper-grass, but I had no more than made it when my friend was in the house. 'Twas me he wanted to see, too, apparently; for he never noted anything else, but headed straight for the loft. I had kind of hoped the other two would amuse him for a while, but it wasn't to be. With the door down, the moonlight streamed in so it was 'most as light as day.

"'Keep your big feet off me!' says Ag, very indignant, as the bear walked on him. It's a great thing not to know who you're talking to sometimes.

"Well, brother bear upends himself, and reaches for the loft. He could just nicely hook his front toe-nails on the board, and when I saw that, I would have sold myself out hide and hair and good-will of the business extremely reasonable. 'Here's where my esteemed friend Hydraulic Smith gets piped out,' I thought, and I tried to meet my finish like a man, but there was something about winding up as filler for a dirty, smelly bear wrapper that took all the poetry out of the situation.

"I saw that Aggy had got on to the state

of affairs at last; he was crawling backward very cautious, and he had a look of pained surprise on his face that beat anything I'd ever seen on the phiz of man or beast before. For all I was so scart that I was sweating icicles, I couldn't help but snicker. Howsomever, at that moment brother bear threw his weight on the board, and she snapped like a toothpick, and my merry smile took a walk. I was in a desperate fix! He had only to keep on pulling down boards to the last one, and then, of course, I'd come down with it. Something had to be done. I grabbed a sack of flour and heaved it at him; the sack caught on a splinter and ripped, so beyond covering him with powder it had no particular result. He *did* stop and taste the flour; he had lots of time! There wasn't any good in that. But as I reached around for another weapon my hand struck the can of alcohol, and right then I had a genuine three-X inspiration. I pulled the plug from the can and poured the spirits down. The bear howled murder as the stuff ran into his eyes, and plunking himself on his hunkies, he began to paw and scrape it out. There was my chance!

I fumbled through all my pockets as fast as my hand could travel—no matches! Then cussing and praying like a steam-engine, I tried it again; found a handful in the first pocket; dropped most of 'em, being so nervous, but scratched what was left and chucked 'em on Mr. Bear.

Great Moses in the bulrushes! Events began on that instant. I've seen a cyclone, and an earthquake, and a cloudburst, and an Injun outbreak, and a Democratic convention, but roll 'em into one and that bear would give 'em cards, spades, big and little casino, a stuffed deck, and the tally-board too, and then beat 'em without looking at his hand.

"I simply can't begin to tell you all the different kinds of pure, unadulterated hell he raised with the stock of curiosities Aggy had bought in town. And the looks of him! White with flour half-way, spouting flames and smoke, and apparently three times as big as he was when he started! He was something before the people now, I tell you! And the burning hair smelt scandalous, and the way he ripped and roared made the ground tremble.

"When he finally broke through the door, I was so interested that I forgot to be afraid, and hopped down to watch him go, and then I saw the last act of the tragedy.

"Miguel heard the shot, and knowing we were in trouble, he started up the trail on his old buckskin, fairly burning the earth.

"He rounded a little clump of trees, and came plump on my bear, roaring, foaming, blazing, smoking, ripping, and flying! Well, sir, you can believe me or not, but I want to tell you that that cayuse of Mee's jumped right out from under him, and was half-way up Wilkin's Hill before the Mexican touched the ground. He was headed due west, and he must have reached the coast the next day, the gait he was travelling. Anyhow, he vanished from the sight of man forever, as far as we know.

"Mee sat froze just as he had landed, scart so there wasn't no more expression on his face, and the bear hopped right over the top of his head. Then I reckon Mee thought his family friend had come for him, for he jumped ten foot in the air, and when he touched ground he was in full motion. It's

only fair to say that Miguel could run when he put his mind to it. 'El Infierno esta suelto!' he yells. 'Santiago! Santiago! Ten quidado conmigo! Madre mia! Salvame! Salvame pronto!' Lord, I can see him now, scuttling over the fair face of the Territory of Idaho in the bright moonlight like a little bird —chest out; hands up; head back; black hair snapping in the breeze; long legs waving like the spokes of a flywheel, and yelling for Santiago to keep an eye on him, and for his mother to save him quick, as long as he was in sight. And when he passed, he passed out. He took a different direction from his horse, so it ain't likely they met, but neither one of 'em was seen no more around our part of the country.

"Still, by and by there floated back to us a story of how a greaser had been chased by a horrible white devil that stood twenty foot high, with teeth a foot long, horns, hoofs, claws, and a spiked tail; which travelled at a rate of speed that made a streak of lightning seem like a way-freight, scattering red fire and brimstone as it ran; which chased said greaser forty mile over hill and dale and gulch and

mountain top and Bad-Land district, after polishing off his horse in one bite, and finally sank into the ground with a report like a ton of giant powder.

"And I've often wondered what really become of that bear."

The Little Bear who Grew

I WAS standing at the door of the office one afternoon in August. The office was on Main Street,—a thoroughfare fronting railroad tracks and a long strip of fenced grass, dotted with newly planted trees, called the "park,"—in a North Dakota town. It was hot. I mean, hot. Down that long thin street the shadows of false-fronted stores lay like blue slag on molten iron. Nothing moved: this particular metropolis-to-be of the Northwest was given over to heat and silence. Yet it wasn't muggy, sea-coast heat that turns bone and muscle into jelly—it was a passion of sun-power, light and heat together.

Just to be on a horse out in it over the prairie swells was to taste the flavour of adventure. But no such thing for me. I had to take care of the office. A thermometer inside that office marked one hundred and fourteen degrees. Had it been inside of me it would have marked three hundred and fourteen degrees.

I shall not tell the series of injustices that

obliged me to stay in that hencoop, while the rest of the force went gleefully up the line to attend a ball game. I didn't count for much, while the decision in regard to the one who stayed rested in the hands of Fate. It was the manager's own pack of cards I cut. I can recall the look of sophisticated astonishment those rascals wore at my persistent bad luck. I found out afterwards that every mother's son of them had bought his ticket the day before. They had faith in that pack of cards. Most of the town had gone with them; this accounted for the deserted village effect. Several days before this I sat up all night reading H. Rider Haggard's "She." The desire to figure in remarkable events had not yet worn off, but a more unlikely theatre of adventure than that Main Street could not be conceived. I looked up and down the length of it. Hark! What sound is that? 'T is the rattle of wheels, and the "plunkety-plunk" of a farm-horse's trot. Around the corner comes an ancient Studebaker waggon drawn by an old horse, and in it two small boys are seated on a bushel basket—hardly a crisis. I fell to envying the small boys, for all that. They could go and

come as they pleased; they were their own masters, free to do as they liked in the world.

As if to show that this was, indeed, the fact, in the broadest meaning of the words, the two urchins suddenly leaped high in the air, uttering shrieks; they landed on the ground and scuttled across the park as fast as legs could carry them. Absolutely no reason for this performance appeared to the eye. The horse stopped, turning his mild gaze after them, then swung his head until he saw me, at whom he gazed with that expression of complete bewilderment always so comical in an equine face. "Account for that, if you can," he said, as plainly as the printed words could do it. Finding no solution in me, he shook his head and blew his nose. He was a kind old horse, always willing to oblige, but to plan an independent compaign was beyond him, so he stood just where he was, probably saying, "Great is Allah!" to himself in the Houyhnhnm tongue, waiting for what was going to happen to get about it. The plot increased in thickness, for the bushel basket began a mysterious journey toward the back of the waggon, impelled by an unseen power.

It was a curious thing to see in broad daylight. I felt quite a prickle down my spine as I watched it. Arriving at the end, over it went, disclosing the secret. From out of that basket came a small bear. I swallowed an ejaculation and looked at him. He, entirely unabashed, returned my gaze—a funny little ruffian! On the end of his spinal column he teetered, all four feet in the air, the cock of his head irresistibly suggesting the tilt of a gamin's cap. His tongue hung waggishly out of his mouth, and a sort of loose, dissipated, tough, cynical humour pervaded his person, from the squint of his little eyes to the absurd post of his hind legs. There was less of the immature bear about him than of the miniature bear. I suppose a young wild animal is like a street Arab, in that he receives his worldly knowledge with his milk.

He had on a collar and chain, whereby I recognised he was someone's property. To clear this part of history, the two small boys had been hired to take him to Mr. D——'s menagerie, when, after a struggle, he had been ensconced beneath the bushel basket. They were not the happy youths I had taken them

for, these boys,—how often we envy the lot of others unwisely!—for they were obliged to sit on the basket in order to retain their captive, dreading all the time what a moment's carelessness brought to pass, an attack from beneath. When one incautious foot ventured too near the basket, Mr. Bear promptly clawed and chewed it; hence the shrieks, and the flight.

Well, not wishing this piece of live stock to escape, I walked toward him, affecting the unconcern necessary in approaching an animal. He did not retreat; he swayed on his spine and regarded me jeeringly. I grabbed the chain and pulled. Instantly, he nailed me by the leg. He had nothing but milk teeth, or I should have been much the worse for the encounter. As it was, he pinched like a vise with his strong little jaws, and I had all I wanted to pry him loose. I tried to hold him at arm's length, but he turned inside of his baggy overcoat and bit and clawed until I gave that up. I then whirled him at the end of the chain. He flew through the air with spread legs until the chain snapped, when he landed many yards away. He was up and off as soon as he

stopped rolling, and I after him. The boy who was running the clothing store several vacant lots from the office came to his door at that moment, and, feeling that a bear hunt was more to his taste than twiddling his thumbs in an empty store, he came along, too, and the flour office and the clothing store were left in the hands of Providence—fortunately there were no thieves in old-time Dakota.

In front was young Mr. Bear, boring a hole in the wind, and behind him two boys, coming strong, but not in his class for speed. Our quarry gained one block in three. We just rounded a barn in time to see him jump into a wood shed behind a real estate office.

I knew a cat with kittens lived in that wood shed, and strained myself to reach there before the fun was over. However, there was ample time. The code of the animal duel is as formal and long-winded as anything the mind of man has devised. Probably everyone has seen two young cockerels, standing with their bills together, apparently lost in a Buddhistic reverie, suddenly broken by violence. They are only an illustration. All animals have their ceremonial of battle, when it is for the fun of

fighting, pure and simple, with the dinner question eliminated.

The weird war song of Mrs. Cat, pealing out from the cracks of the wood shed, assured us we would be repaid for our trouble, but the tone indicated that the fell moment had not arrived. We peered through a chink. The cat was in a corner, her family around her. Her eyes roamed all over the wood shed, merely taking the bear in *en passant*. She seemed unconscious of the awful noise which ripped the air.

The bear, for his part, was unaware of the proximity of a yowling cat. He never so much as glanced in her direction, having found a very diverting chunk of coal, which he batted about the floor. A singular thing was that, when the coal moved it always moved nearer the cat.

The cat prepared for trouble, after the manner of her kind, and the bear prepared to cause it, after the manner of his kind. Occasionally, when a blood-curdling screech from his antagonist rang upon his eardrums, the cub would stop a moment and gaze pensively through and beyond the end of the wood shed,

as if, indeed, from far off, a certain sound, made filmy and infinitesimal by distance, had reached him. Then he would smile deprecatingly to himself, as if to say, "How easily I am deceived!"

Excellent as was the feigned indifference of Mr. Bear, it must be borne in mind that he was opposed to an animal of parts. Our friend, the cat, was not a whit taken in by the comedy. When the time came for her to leap she was ready, to the last hair of her chimney-cleaner tail. She had been making most elaborate preparations all the while, stretching and retracting her claws, squirming her whalebone body flatter and flatter, her tail assuming majestic proportions, while her ears disappeared in inverse ratio.

Nearer and nearer came the chunk of coal and the slouching little bear, a touch of caution in each pretended careless action. Awful and more awful grew Grimalkin's battle plaint—her eyes blazed demoniacally.

By some subtle assurance, we humans were made aware that, on the floor of the wood shed, an imaginary deadline had been drawn by Mrs. Cat, and, when Ursus Minor ad-

vanced so much as the length of a claw beyond that in his orbit, an incident would mark his career. You may believe me or not, but the little bear understood not only this much, but he also knew where that line lay. Fully a minute he tantalised us by coquetting with it. He would advance recklessly, and we would say to ourselves, "Now!" when, lo! he would turn at the fatal point, to lie on his side and amuse himself by clawing at the chunk of coal.

Suddenly he boldly stepped across. An instant of numbing silence fell. A swish! A cat on a small bear's back. A scene impossible! A hairy tornado, rolling, twisting, flopping, yelling, screeching, roaring, and howling, tore, bit, scratched, clawed, and walloped all over the place. An epileptic nebula; a maelstrom that revolved in every way known to man at the same instant; a prodigy of tooth and claw. If that fight were magnified a hundred times, a glimpse of it would kill; as it was, myself and the clothing store boy clung weakly to the wall and wept.

The cat's tough hide easily turned the bear's claws, and his teeth were too tiny to work mis-

chief; while his thick, shaggy coat made pussy's keener weapons ineffectual. As a consequence, the storm raged with unbridled ferocity, the motion of the foemen being so swift none could tell who was getting the better of it. There was energy in that small action and a bitterness of sound altogether indescribable, the mews of the astounded kittens quavering shrilly and loudly through the general frenzy.

At length, in spite of his antagonist's agility, the bear managed to get his "holt," and puss, wrapped in his strong arms, was practically whipped; not without protest—she was a "last-ditch" warrior. The bear settled back as grim and stolid as General Grant might have done, while the chivalry of the wood shed applied her hind claws to his waistcoat. However, the bear could do a little in this line himself. The effect was that each tried unsuccessfully to walk up the other.

The "strangle hold" began to tell. Never shall I forget the desperation in that cat's face as it appeared between the squeezing arms of the bear. Their attitude had such a resemblance to the "Huguenot Lovers" I have not

been able since to look at that celebrated picture with proper countenance.

At this point, my companion and I came to the rescue. Finding all attempts at separating them by hand resulted in the usual wages of the peacemaker, we grabbed the chain and hauled the war to the pump. The pump was only a short distance way, yet it took us several minutes to make the trip, as every time we turned and gazed at them, their rigid adherence to their relative positions, no matter what condition as a whole this mode of locomotion caused them to assume, and the leering, *bourgeois* complacency of the victorious bear, contrasting with the patrician despair of the vanquished, caused such a weakness to come over us that we had to sit upon the ground for a while.

Water is the universal solvent. About half a minute under the pump formed the solution of this problem. A wet and skinny-looking cat, her elegance departed, streaked back to the wood shed and her offspring, while a sober and bedraggled little bear trotted behind his captors to Mr. D——'s menagerie.

This was my introduction to this bear. We

called him "Cat-thumper," after the Indian fashion of christening a child from some marked exploit or incident in his career. This became contracted to "Thumper," an appropriate title, for, with the fat pickings of the restaurant, his bearship grew with a rapidity that made it a puzzle how his hide contained him.

Under these genial conditions Thumper developed humour. It became possible for one to romp with him, and in the play he was careful not to use his strength. So exemplary became his conduct that his owner, a man who never could learn from experience, or even from Billy Buck, decided to take him on Main Street. Mr. D——'s novelties were a standing menace to the security of the town and his own person as well. The amount of vanity that fat little man possessed would have supplied a theatrical company. One of his first acts, on entering a town, was to purchase the fiercest white hat, and the most aboriginal buck-skin suit to be obtained, and then don them. Almost the next act on the part of his fellow-townsmen was to hire a large and ferocious looking "cow-puncher" to recognise in

Mr. D—— an ancient enemy, and make a vicious attack upon him with blank cartridges and much pomp and circumstance. Still it had no permanent effect on Mr. D——. Badinage could not wither him nor cussing stale his infinite variety. With all his exasperating traits, he had an impassable child-like faith in his doings and a soothing influence that made one smile when one wanted to cry.

The passage up street was made with no happening worthy of note except, of course, that other travellers gave him a wide berth (to Mr. D——'s extreme gratification) until they came to the butcher shop. Here Thumper's first move was to steal a fine tenderloin from the block, and swallow it whole.

"Ye're!" yelled the proprietor, an ex-Indian scout, "whatcher doin' there? Take that critter out of here!"

"I'm willing to pay for the meat," replied Mr. D——, with dignity.

"That's all right, too," retorted the proprietor, "but I promised it to Mr. Smith, and it's the only one I've got. How are you going to square that? What do you mean by toting

a brute like that around, anyhow?" he wound up with increasing choler.

"I cannot see but what I have a perfect right to take with me any animal or animals I choose!" said Mr. D——.

"Not into this shop, by Jingo!" said the proprietor, reaching under the counter. "Now you sneak him out of here, quick, or I'll shoot him."

"Very well," said Mr. D——, bowing, but red, "very well. Come, Thumper!"

Thumper was in no mind to move. He liked the situation. Mr. D—— pulled on the chain, and Thumper overlooked it. A small crowd gathered in front of the door and encouraged Mr. D—— by calling, "Pull hard, the man says!" "Now, altogether, yee-hoooo!" and similar remarks. I have always felt that a bear enjoys a joke. In this case I am sure of it. Showing no bad temper, he simply refused to budge, and, by this time, when he had made up his mind, the decision was final, as far as any one man was concerned. Mr. D——'s temper went by the board; it was an embarrassing situation. "Come out of that!" he cried, with a sharp jerk at the chain.

The look of irritation vanished from the proprietor's face. "Why don't some of you fellers help the gentleman out with his bear?" he asked. Thereupon the spectators took a hand and Thumper was dragged into the street. Evidently he thought this one of the usual frolics to which we boys had accustomed him; for, once upon the sidewalk, he began to prance and gambol in the graceful fashion of his kind. It so happened that the nurse-girl of the mayor of the town, a huge Swede woman as broad as she was long (which is almost hyperbole), came trundling her charge up the board walk at the precise moment that Thumper bowled over a gentleman in front and came plainly to her view.

One Norwegian war-whoop and away she galloped, the perambulator before her, as it was not in the mind of the Vikingess to desert her duty. Screeching, she tore up the walk, the carriage bouncing and rattling, and the baby crowing with delight. An Indian stepped out of a store directly in front of her. Him Telka rammed with such fury that he landed on his neck in the road, with his feet in the air. But, as he regained his balance,

resentment was drowned in unbounded amazement. "Wakstashoneee!" he said, "wakstashoneeeee!" which is the limit in the Sioux tongue. Never had the Dakota warrior expected to see the day when he would be made to bite the earth by a Swede woman and a baby carriage. Around the corner for home whirled Telka, making the turn like a circus horse. Arriving at the house, she placed one fairy foot against the door with such spirit that the lock-socket hit the opposite wall, picked up carriage and baby and went upstairs with them three rises to a leap. At the top she burst into a wild oratory of "tanks" and "Eenyens" and "beejjeerens" and "yoomps," scaring her mistress into the belief that the Sioux had attacked the town in force—an event she had long anticipated.

Thumper was led back to his pole in the park, and fastened with an ox-chain, this step being taken at the request of an informal committee of citizens. "Chained bear or dead bear" was their ultimatum, for, while they enjoyed Telka's performance, they didn't propose to make it a custom to obtain their fun from frightened women. So Thumper's free-

dom of the city lasted but a day. To make amends for this, we boys used to go in and tussle with him more often than before. The play was the bright spot in the life of the captive. He would begin his double shuffle of joy whenever a group of boys made their appearance. At first, this went well enough. As I have said, the bear's nature revealed its better side, under the benign influence of plenty to eat, and I cannot remember that he once took advantage of his vast and growing strength. Mr. D—— encouraged the performances, as the menagerie's purpose was to attract the attention of travellers who had a half-hour's wait at the station, and thus to spread the fame of his railroad eating-house. But misfortune came, through the applause of the passengers. Several young men of the town embraced the opportunity to show off. One of these, a brawny young six-foot Irishman named Jim, used to punch old Thumper pretty roughly, when he had a large audience. Jim was neither a bad-hearted nor cruel fellow; he simply had a body too large for his disposition. In the phrase of the West, he was "staggering with strength," and in Thumper he found a chance

to work off his superfluous nervous energy—also to occupy the centre of our local stage for the brief time of train-stop. If it is love that makes the world go round, certainly vanity first put it into motion. "All is vanity," said the Preacher. From the devoted astronomer's austere lifework to the twinkle of a fairy's glittering tinsel; from the glories of the first man up the battle-swept hill to the infamous assassin, all is vanity. Such a universal attribute must necessarily be good, except in abnormal growth. Jim showed his overdevelopment of the faculty, while the abused Thumper modestly sat still and grew. And still he grew, and still he grew—with a quiet energy that made the fact that he had passed from a large bear to a very large bear go by unnoticed.

Several times, when Jim was showing more skill than Thumper, the memory of a mauled cat came to my mind. The ursine look shot at Jim now and then recalled it. I even went to the length of remonstrating, but it was without effect. It was on a Sunday morning that Nemesis attended to Jim's case. Circumstances were propitious. An excursion train, crowded with passengers, pulled up at the station. Jim

had a new suit of black broadcloth, due to a temporary aberration of our local Solomon who ran the clothing store. Because of this victory, Jim was in an extraordinarily expansive mood as he swaggered down the platform.

"I guess I'll try a fall out of the bear," he announced to his companions, in a tone that informed all of his intention. Gaily he swung his long legs over the fence and advanced upon Thumper, who, by a strange coincidence, was poised on the end of his spine, with his feet in the air and his tongue lolling humorously out of his mouth, as when I first made his acquaintance. The bear noted the approach from the corner of his eye, stretched out his paws, examined them critically, seemed satisfied with the inspection, shook himself thoroughly, and resigned affairs to Fate.

Jim, stimulated by the remarks of the passengers and their eager interest in his doings, marched up to Thumper, struck a sparring attitude, and shuffled around, making sundry little passes and jabs which the bear ignored.

"Punch him!" cried a voice in the crowd. Jim lunged; the bear ducked, lazily, but effec-

tually, and the crowd laughed. Jim drove right and left at his antagonist; the bear parried, ducked, and got away, until the crowd shrieked with merriment and the Irishman was furious. He lived to punch that bear, and, at length, he succeeded—square on the end of Thumper's snout. The bear sneezed, dropped his head, and stared fixedly at Jim.

"Run!" I yelled—alack! too late. Up rose Thumper to a paralysing height, higher still went his trusty paw, and down it came, with a swinging, sidewise blow on the Irishman's neck.

I will maintain, by oath, affirmation, or combat, that Mr. Jim made six complete revolutions, like a button on a barn door, before he struck mother earth with the dullest of thuds.

Ten to one that the town was out one Irishman would have seemed a good business proposition, and, to clinch the assurance, the bear began to walk on Jim. While the bear kneaded him like a batch of dough, some of us woke and rushed to the scene of action.

I do not remember clearly how we got out of it. Some pulled at the bear's chain, and

some grabbed Jim by whatever offered a hold. At length James was rescued, alive and weeping, though three-quarters of the new suit, including the most useful portion of the nether garments, remained in Bruin's paws as the spoils of victory. The crowd on the platform was charmed. This was precisely the thing it had travelled miles to see.

Poor Jim! He was a spectacle. Tears, scratches, and dust robbed his face of all humanity; the scant remnants of the Sunday suit fluttered in the breeze; his shaking knees barely supported him. We gave him a stimulant, a blanket, and some good advice. Mr. D——, for once in his life on the right side of the question, was especially forward in furnishing the last necessity. So passed Jim from the field of his glories, and, barring some scratches, bruises, and a stiff neck (not to mention the Sunday suit, as that loss really fell upon Solomon), he was as well as ever inside of a few days. The only lasting result of the encounter for him was that, when the small boy of the town thirsted for excitement, there would arise a cry of "Hey, Jim! bin down ter pet cher bear?" and then . . .

When the train departed, and the crowd had disappeared, I went down and looked at Thumper. He seemed unchanged. I offered him a cracker; he stretched out the back of his paw, having learned that people shrank from the sight of his five-inch claws, in acceptance. This gobbled, he eyed me, as he leaned back against his pole, like an absurd fat man. Humour shone on the outside of him, but I fancied that, deep in his eyes, I could see a dull red glow, Indian style. "Now," said I to myself, "from the pangs of Jim I shall extract a moral lesson. Whenever I feel like showing off at somebody's expense, let me use caution not to select a grizzly bear."

What Thumper thought no man can tell.

In the Absence of Rules

WE had a pig when we was down on the little Chantay Seeche. The Doctor begged him off a rancher, to eat up the scraps around camp. A neat person was the Doctor and a durned good cook.

We called him the Doctor because he wore specs—that's as good a claim as many has to the title. His idee was that when the pig got fat he would sell him for lots of money, but long before Foxey Bill (which was piggy) had reached the market stage money couldn't buy him. He was a great pig. My notion of hogs, previous to my acquaintance with him, was that they were dirty, stupid critters, without any respectable feelings. Perhaps it's because animals get man-like, when you associate with 'em a great deal, or perhaps Foxey Bill was an unusual proposition; but, anyhow, he was the funniest, smartest brute I ever see, and we thought a slew of him.

Clean was no name for his personal appearance. Every Sunday the Doctor took a scrub-

brush and piggy down to the creek and combined 'em with the kind assistance of a cake of soap. Then Foxey just shone white as ivory, and he'd trot around in front of us, gruntin' to attract our attention, till everybody'd said, "What a beautiful, clean pig—ain't he just right?" Then he'd grunt his thanks to the company and retire behind the shack for a nap. We used to fair kill ourselves laughing at that darned pig. He had the most wheedlin' squeal, so soft and pleadin'; and he'd look up at you with them skim-milk eyes of his so pitiful, when he wanted a chunk of sugar, that you couldn't refuse him.

And knowing! Honest, he knew more'n some men. One day old Wind River was tellin' some things (that *might* have happened to him) in his usual way, bein' most careful to get the dates and all dead right, you know —"Now, *was* his name Peter, after all? Comes to my mind it was Willyam—Willyam Perkins—Well—But, anyhow, him and me, we saw that Injun," and so forth. This was a Sunday, and the gang of us sittin' in a circle, fixing leathers and one thing and another and misstatin' history faster than a horse could

trot, with Foxey Bill in the middle, cocking his head from one speaker to another, takin' it all in.

At last Wind River wound up the most startlin' and unlikely collections of facts he'd

"Clean was no name for his personal appearance"

favoured us with for some time. Up gets Foxey with a shriek and gallops around the house. Any man with the rudiments of intel-

ligence would know he was hollerin': "Well, that's just too much for me; ta-ra-rum!"

Wind River looked scart. "Say!" says he. "Say! Thet hawg knows I'm er-lyin' jes' 's

"Up gets Foxy with a shriek and gallops around the house"

well 's I do!" After that old Windy used to talk to the pig as though they'd been raised together.

Foxey Bill made one miscalculation. He thought he was a small pet, like a cat. This didn't jibe with the five hundred pounds of meat he toted. And, like a cat, one of his principal amusements was to have his back scratched. If you didn't pay attention to him,

when he squealed so pretty for you to please curry him with a board, he'd hump up his back, like a cat, and rub against your legs. You instantly landed on your scalp-lock and waved the aforesaid legs in the air. Of course, when the other fellers saw this comin', they didn't feel it restin' on their conscience to call your attention to it—in fact, we sometimes busied one another talkin' to give Foxey a fair field. So Foxey had things his own way around the diggin's for some time.

Then comes bow-legged Hastings, our boss, with a ram tied hard and fast in the bottom of the waggon. He explains to us that the ram is valuable, but that he's butted merry Halifax out of everything down to home, and he don't want to shut him up, so will we please take care of him? And we said No—Wanitchee heap—we guessed not—never.

Then Hastings got mad and talked to us, flyin' his hands. Such a disobligin', stubborn, sour outfit he never saw, he said. What was the use of his bein' boss, when we just laid awake nights thinkin' up disagreeable things to do to him? Was there ever a time that he'd asked us to do this or that, that every man in

reach didn't r'ar up and jump down his throat? He said he'd rather be a nigger rooster on a condemned government steamboat than bear the title of boss of such a rag-chewin', hide-bound set of mules; kick, kick,

"Old Windy used to talk to the pig as though they'd been raised together"

kick—nothin' but kick, and life wasn't worth livin'.

So then he went behind the shack and pouted. Well, we liked Hastings, and this made us feel bad—that's the way he worked us.

The Doctor, he fried up a dish of all-sorts in his happiest manner and took it around in a cheerful voice. No. Didn't want food.

Heart was broke. So then we all went and apologised and agreed to keep the ram. Then Hastings recovered, and we had that cussed sheep on our hands and feet and all over us.

"He'd hump up his back . . . and rub against your legs"

Well, it was like the devil enterin' a happy home. As for Foxey, he just took one long look at the brute, curlin' and uncurlin' his little tail; then "Hungh!" says he, and blinked

his eyes shut, walkin' away from there. I've seen times when I'd liked to been able to use the English of that grunt, to thoroughly acquaint some gentleman of how little I thought of him, but I ain't got the gift of speech. It was an awful call-down—but the sheep, he didn't care. If there *was* such a thing as a foolish Sheeny, that's what a sheep would remind me of.

But the rest of us run into practical and applied trouble in its various branches. There's one night, the Doctor starts for the cabin with a mess of flap-jacks in his hands, and the sheep comes up and pushes him in the pistol pocket so that the Doctor goes sailing into the drink with a stack of brown checks hoverin' all around him.

Then Wind River shows his one tooth and rocks on his heels, hollerin' and laughin', and the sheep rises up and smites him on the hip and thigh so he flew after the Doctor like a grey-whiskered sky-rocket, with a ha-ha! cut in two in the middle. "Woosh!" says old Windy as he comes up. "Hi, there cooky! I'll beat you ashore!" He was a handy-witted old Orahanna, that Windy, and you didn't put

the kybosh on him easy. So it went with all of us. That ram come out of no-where-at-all another night and patted me on the stummick

"No. Didn't want food. Heart was broke"

so I pretty near fainted. I tried to twist his cussed head off his shoulders, but he'd knocked the wind out of me so it was like fightin' an army in a nightmare. I was glad

when the boys come out and pried me loose. Oh, oh! How we hated that woolly, blaatin' fool of a sheep!

"Well," says Windy, "I'm layin' fur th' day he snaggles himself up with Foxey Bill. You're goin' to see a nice quiet sheep after that happens."

The rest of us had lots of faith in Billy, but we couldn't see where he stood a show to win.

"Shucks!" says Steve. "The sheep'll knock the bacon out of him. The Lord knows I

"'Hungh!' says he, and blinked his eyes shut"

don't want to see it, but that's what's got to happen. Poor Bill ain't onto his style of fightin' at all. You know how pigs make war —standin' side by side, tryin' to hook each other in the flank, gruntin' and circlin' around

with little quick steps—how's that goin' to apply to this son-of-a-gun that hits you a welt like a domestic cannon and then chases himself off to the sky-line for another try?"

"Well," cuts in the Doctor. "I ain't

"The Doctor goes sailing into the drink"

a-sayin' *how*—but Bill *does* him, all the same—bet your life."

"You talk feeble minded," says Steve. "Nobody'd more like to believe you than me,

but the points ain't on the cards. It'll be just like that Braddock's campaign agin the Injuns. There goes the Britishers (that's Bill) amblin' gaily through the woods, dressed up in red and marchin' arm to arm, for fear some careless Injun would miss 'em, and there's the Injuns (that's that durned ram) off in the woods jumpin' up and down with pleasure and surprise. 'Oh, Jimmy!' hollers the Injun to his little boy. 'Run get grandpa, Towser, mama, and the baby—everybody's goin' to pick one of these and take it home—no Injun so poor but what he's entitled to at least one Englishman.'"

"That's all right," says Windy. "But where's your Injun *now?*"

"Well," says Steve, flabbergasted, "that's kind of true, too; he has vanished some."

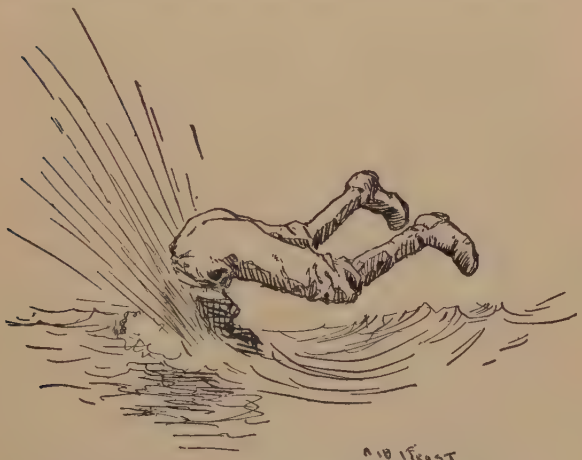
"I bet you money," says the Doctor, "that Bill does him."

"I hate to rob the poor in mind," says Steve. "And yet I'd like to lose that bet—make it a month's wages?"

"I'm for standin' by my friend," says the Doctor. "I'll bet you up to the first of January."

"Got you," says Steve. "You know where you can borrow chewin', anyhow. Any other gentleman want part of this?"

Steve had money he'd drew out of his poker game up-town, so the rest of us stood not to

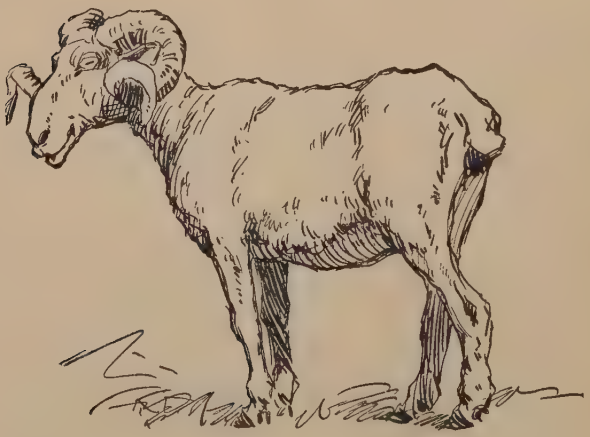


"A ha ha! cut in two in the middle"

live high until after January first, if Foxey Bill didn't lick that sheep. We didn't believe he would, but he carried our money.

Well, sir, it was a tough time waitin' for the combat to come off. Bill simply despised the sheep. Couldn't stand near to him. The

only time he'd stay by the house was when the sheep was off somewheres. And, of course, it was strictly against the rules for any person



"That woolly, blaatin' fool of a sheep"

to aid, abet, or help either warrior, or interfere in any way, shape, or manner.

I was two mile out from camp one day, when I heard "Ke-bang, ke-bang, ke-bang-ety, bang-bang-bang-bang!" The Doctor was losin' off all the guns in the shack to once. I

hollered to Steve, him to Windy, and then we flew for home, leavin' the calves to their own responsibilities for a while.

The other boys was on hand when we arrived, their faces shinin' with excitement, and yellin' to us for the love of Moses to shake a leg before it was too late.

"Chases himself off to the sky-line for another try"

Poor Billy was pickin' himself up, after rollin' over three times, and the durned ram was prancin' away, wigglin' his tail like little boys does their fingers, with a thumb to the nose.

The Doctor explained to us, whilst we was

waitin' for the next jar. "There's Bill," says he, "eatin' his meal out of his half-a-barrel as quiet and decent a citizen as you'll find anywheres. That's his grub and he don't like grass. Well, what must that quar'lsome hunk of horns and mutton do, but try to shove him away from there. Mind you, that ram *does* like grass, and he's got several hundred thousand square mile of it to lunch on—but no, sir! What he must have is a hunk of bread out of Billy's barrel. Now, Billy's no hog—he lets him have the piece of bread—then the ram wants the hull barrel; hoops, staves, and all. That's too hootin' goldarn many for anybody to stand, by ninety-nine per cent., so Bill slams him one. The ram walks off and fetches him a swat like hittin' a side of beef with a fourteen-foot board. Poor old Bill rolls three yards. Then he takes after the brute, but the ram runs away as usual. Billy thinks the fight is over and goes on with his eatin'. You're just in time to see the end of the second round. Bill's *goin'* to lick him, but cuss me if I see *how*. He can't get *at* that blaatin', skippin' mess of wickedness. He don't understand at all. If the sheep would give him one fair

hack, he'd show him—Look! Oh, Lordy! There he goes again! *Damn* that sheep!"

It was an awful sight for Billy's friends to witness. I'll never tell you how many times he went rollin' down the hill, only to come back as game and useless as a rooster fightin' his reflection in a lookin' glass. He'd chase after the sheep, gruntin' fierce, but pshaw! the

"The durned ram was prancin' away"

critter'd simply trot right away from him, wigglin' that insultin' tail in his face. Old Billy's tail was coiled as tight as a watch-spring with rage.

"He'll *do* him," says the Doctor. "He sure *will!* Now you wait!"

"I am waitin'," says Steve, at the end of the twentieth round. "Waitin' and waitin'. The

"He was knocked galley-west"

only play that I see Billy makin' is for the sheep to break his neck buntin' him. You hand me that rifle. I'll now bet the crowd there's a dead sheep here in five seconds by the watch. I can't stand this."

But we wouldn't let him cut in. Fair play is fair play.

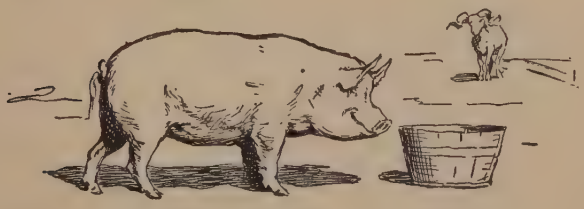
"Boys," says Wind River soft, "Bill has laid his ropes—I see it in his eye!"

"G'wan!" says Steve. "You see it in your own eye!"

"Well, you watch," says Windy. "Bill and me has been pretty well acquainted ever since that day he called me a liar—look at him now!"

Sure enough. Bill was nosin' his barrel away from the house. I couldn't see the point exactly, but took it on faith.

He was knocked galley-west and crooked three times before he moved the thing a rod,



"That pig looked up and smiled"

but whatever he had in his mind, he calmly went on with it as soon as he got up.

"Oh, thunder!" says the Doctor. "See him now! Billy, you're an old fool! You'll get butted plumb into the crik, next pass!" For Bill had pushed the barrel to within five foot

of the edge of the creek. And when he heard the Doctor talk, I'll take my oath, that pig looked up and smiled.

"He's got him now!" says Wind River. "He's got him now, for all my next year's salary! I see it in his face!"

And Windy was so dead sure he impressed the rest of us. So there's silence, whilst old Foxey Bill is chewin' away in the barrel, and the ram is comin' over the grass—t-r-rmt, t-r-rrmt—as hard as he can paste her, head down and eyes shut. Bill, he doesn't see anything either, until there ain't more'n three foot of air between 'em, and then he jumps aside!

"Swoosh!" goes the ram into the water, and Billy straightens out his little curly tail and waves it in the air like a flag. And *holler!* I wisht you could have heard that pig! Nothing could been more human. "I've got the deady-deady on you, you hook-nosed, slab-sided, second cousin of a government mule!" says he. "Oh! I've got you where I want you and the way I want you, and it's up to you to convert yourself into cash at the earliest opportunity, for you won't be worth much in the market when I'm tired of my fun!" This he

says as he gallops to the other side, to head the sheep off, his mild blue eye on fire. I tell you

"And holler! I wisht you could have heard that pig"

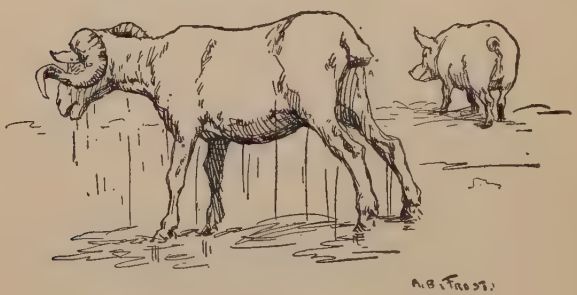
it's dangerous to rouse up a fat person with a mild blue eye.

A sheep don't swim much better than a mowin' machine, and this feller got desperate

—he was for the shore, no matter what broke. And Bill ripped the wool out of him for fair as he tried to scramble up.

"Our fight, Steve!" says the Doctor. "I *knew* he'd do him all the time! You throw up the sponge and we'll yank the critter out!"

"Let him drown," says Steve. "I don't like



"Done. Everlastingly done"

him, hide nor hair—and, besides, think what he's cost me."

But that wouldn't do. Hastings would have looked so mournful, happiness couldn't get along in the same territory with him. So out comes Mr. Ram. Done. Everlastingly done. All in and the cover screwed down. We pointed our fingers at him and did a war-dance

around him, sayin': "Agh—*hagh!* You *will,* will you? Now, don't you wish you'd been good!" He hadn't a word to say. And that good old Billy, he comes up and rubs Wind River's legs out from under him just as natural as ever, not set up or swell-headed a bit, like the gentleman he was.

The ram eat his grass and minded his own business from that time on.

For Sale, the Golden Queen

THIS is the story of the great Golden Queen deal, as Hy Smith told it, after recovering his sanity:

Aggy and me were snug up against it. One undeserved misfortune after another had come along and swatted us, till it looked as though we'd have to work for a living. But we plugged along at the Golden Queen, taking out about thirty cents a day—coarse, gold, fortunately—and at last we had 'bout an ounce and a half. Then says Aggy:

"We could sell this mine, Hy, if we only put our profits in the right place."

"Yes," says I. "This is a likely outfit around here to stick a gravel-bank on, ain't it? Good old Alder Gulch people, and folks from down Arizony way, and the like of that! Suppose you tried it on Uncle Peters, for instance—d'ye know what he'd say? Well, this 'ud be about the size of it: 'Unh, unh! Oh, man! Oh, dear me! That ain't no way to salt a mine, Ag! No, no! You'd oughter done this,

and that—that's the way we used to do in Californy—nice weather, ain't it? No, thanks —I don't care to buy no placer mines—lots of country left yet for the taking up of it—it's a mighty good mine, I admit—you'd better keep it.' That's what he'd say."

Ag combed his whiskers with his fingers. "I don't think we could close out to Uncle Peters," says he.

"And if you tried some of the rest of 'em, they'd walk on your frame for insulting their intelligence. Perhaps you was thinking of inviting Pioche Bill Williams up to take a look at the ground?"

"Well, no," says Aggy, slowly. "I don't think I'd care to irritate Bill—he's mighty careless with firearms."

"I should remark. I ain't a cautious man myself in some ways, and I've met a stack of fellers that was real liberal in their idees, but for a man that takes no kind of interest in what comes afterward, give me Pioche Bill. Oh, no, Aggy, we don't sell any placer mines in these parts."

"I tell you what," says Ag. "Let's go up to town. Stands to reason there must be a

mut or two up there—somebody just dying to go out and haul wealth out of the soil."

"We're a good advertisement for the business. We look horrible prosperous, don't we?" says I.

The main deck of Ag's pants was made of a flour sack. I had a pretty decent pair, but my coat was one-half horse blanket and the other half odds and ends. Ag had a long-tailed coat he used to wear when he was doing civil engineering jobs.

"We could fix one man out fairly well," says he.

"Yes; and the other would look like the losing side of a scarecrow revolution."

"Wait a minute," says he, "I'm thinking." So he sat and twisted his whiskers and whistled through his teeth.

"I've got it!" says he. "The whole business right down to the dot! Darned if it ain't the best scheme I ever lit on! Here's what happened to us: We're two honest prospectors that have been gophering around this country for years, never touching a colour, grub running low, and—well, there ain't any use bothering with that part now. I can think

it up when the time comes. Here's the cream of the plant. We've had such a darn hard time of it that when at last, under the extraordinary circumstances which I have recounted before, we light on the almost undiluted gold of the Golden Queen, your mind is so weakened that you can't stand the strain of prosperity. You're haunted with delusions that you're still a poor man, and I can't keep any decent clothes on you—fast as I buy 'em you tear 'em up. Now I'm willing to sell the Golden Queen for the merely nominal sum of —what shall we strike 'em for? Five hundred? For five hundred dollars, then, so I can get out of this country to some place where my poor pardner will receive good medical treatment."

"And I'm the goat?" says I. "Well, I expected that. But do you expect anybody's going to swallow that guff? It's good. Ag, it would do fine in a newspaper, but can you find a man to trade five hundred hard iron dollars for it?"

Aggy drew himself up mighty proud. "I'll tell you what I've done in my day," says he, "I've made an intelligent man believe that

the first story I told him wasn't so. Can you beat it?"

"I know you, Ag," says I. Then we had to slide down and see if we could get a small loan off Uncle Peters, for we didn't have enough dust to finance salting our sand-bank and pay for a trip to town, too. Ag would have it that we must do our turn for the old man. "It'll amuse him," says he, "and he's more likely to come forward." Truth of the matter was, when Aggy got one of his fine idees, he had to let the neighbourhood in.

Well, sir, Uncle Peters was that pleased he forked over a cartridgeful without weighing it. My play was to look melancholy, and tear a slit in my clothes once in a while. I had to just make believe that part when we was rehearsing for the old man, as there wasn't enough material to be extravagant with.

So up to town we goes, and if you ever see a picture of hard luck on two feet, it was me.

"I'm going to strike for a gambling joint," says Ag. "You take a tin-horn gam, and he knows everything, and that's just the kind of man I'm looking for."

So when we hit town, Ag sails into the

Palace Dance Emporium, where they had the games running in the middle of the place between the lunch counter and the bar. He had nerve, had Agamemnon G. Jones.

"Hy," says he, "you'll have to watch the play a little. Mebbe you'd ought to change some, just as it happens. I'll have to do my lying according to the way the circumstances fall, so keep your eye peeled, and whatever you do, do it from the bottom of your heart. I can fix it so long as you don't queer me by shacking along too easy."

So saying he fixes the new necktie he'd bought down at the corner, tilts the new hat a little, and braces ahead. He could look more dressed up on 20 cents' worth of new clothes than some men could with a whole store behind 'em.

When we got into the place the folks gazed at us. Aggy was leading me by the hand.

"There," says he, very gentle. "Now sit down, and I'll tell you a story by and by."

I tore a hole in the coat, and mumbled to myself, and sat down according to directions.

Then Aggy walks up to where the stud-poker game was blooming.

"Gentlemen," says he, making them a bow, "I trust it won't inconvenience you any to have my poor unfortunate pardner in your midst for awhile? I can't desert him, and I do like to play a little cards now and then."

"What's the matter with him?" asks the dealer.

Ag taps his head.

"Violent?" asks the dealer.

Now, Ag didn't know just how he wanted to have it, so he didn't commit himself to nothing.

"Oh, I can always handle him," says he.

"Well, come right in," says the dealer. "They're only a dollar a stack."

"Well," says Ag, "I'll just invest in $10 worth to pass away the time—you take dust, don't you?"

"I used to say I wouldn't take anybody's dust," says the dealer, being funny with such a good customer, "but since I've struck this country I've found I've gotter."

Ag pulls out the old buckskin sack, that would hold enough to support quite a family through the winter. It was stuffed with gravel stones.

"Oh, here!" says he, whilst he was fumbling with the strings. "No use to open that—I've got another package—what you might call small change." Then he digs up Uncle Peters' cartridge shell.

I want to tell you I had my own troubles keeping my face together while Ag was doing his work. You never see any such good-natured, old-fashioned patriarch as he was. When they beat him out of a hand he'd laugh fit to kill himself.

"You're welcome, boys!" he'd say. "There's plenty more of it."

At the same time, you wouldn't live high on all you could make out of Aggy on a stud-poker game. He was playing 'em right down to cases, yet the way he talked, he seemed like the most liberal cuss that ever threw good money away. Of course, they had to ask him about his pardner and the rest of it whilst the cards were being shuffled, and a few inquiring remarks drew the whole sad story out of Ag.

"It's mighty tough," says he; "Hy's a fine-looking feller, when he's dressed decent; but the sight of new clothes on himself makes him

furious; he foams and rips till he's tore them to gun-wadding."

"Where did you say this here claim of yours was?" asks the dealer.

"Up on Silver Creek—just below Murphy's butte," answers Ag. politely.

Then that dealer put in a lot of foxy questions making poor, innocent, unsuspecting Aggy give himself dead away. He told how there wasn't time to look for a buyer that would pay the proper price and he wouldn't know where to look anyhow, so he'd have to take the first man that offered, even if he didn't get no more than five hundred for the claim.

The dealer breathed hard and fairly shuffled the spots off the cards.

"Now," says he, "I sympathise with you—I understand just how you feel about your pardner. I'm the same kind of man myself, that way. If I had a pardner in difficulties, I wouldn't mind what I lost on it so long's I could fix him up."

Here's where I nearly choked to death, for if any man could get the price of a meal off that tinhorn, without sitting on his chest and

feeding him the end of a six-shooter, his face was one of the meanest tricks a deserving man ever had sprung on him.

"So if I was you," continued the dealer, "I'd get him out of this country quick, and as for your claim, why, I don't mind if I held you out on that myself," says he. "I don't want no mines; I wouldn't bother with it, only I see you're a good, kind-hearted man, and it's my motto that such people ought to be encouraged. Now, what do you say if we start for a look at the territory this afternoon? Nothing like doing things up while you are at it." Aggy kind of scratched his head as if this hurry surprised him. "I didn't just think of letting it go so sudden," said he. "You know I'm kind of attached to the place."

"That's all foolishness," says the dealer. "Your poor pardner there wants attention—you can see that—and I don't believe you're the sort of man to let him go on suffering when there ain't no need of it."

"No," says Aggy, thoughtfully, "that's so."

"And would you mind," says the dealer, his hand fairly trembling to get hold of it,

"just letting me have a squint at that gunny-sack full of dust you have in your clothes?" I didn't require any hint from Ag that it was my place to be violent. With one loud holler I landed on my ear on the floor and kicked the poker table on top of the dealer. More'n a half-dozen men hopped on to me, and we had it for fair all over the place. I gave 'em the worth of their time before they got me in the corner.

"Whew!" says Aggy, wiping his brow, "this is the worst attack he's had yet."

"Just what I was telling you," says the dealer, very confidential and earnest. "You want to get him away from here quick—I've had some experience in those kinds of cases, and when I see your friend's face, I knew you wanted to get a move on."

"It's dreadful, ain't it?" says Ag. "I believe you're in the right about it—but, say, I feel that I'd ought to pay for the lamp he busted."

"Not at all," says the dealer, as generous as could be. "Not at all! That's an accident might have happened to any gentleman. Now, I'll just take a friend along, and we'll sail

right out to your place. Can you drive there?"

"Oh, yes!" said Aggy. "The roads ain't anything extra, but you can make it all right."

So away goes the four of us that afternoon. Ag and me, we felt leary of the fourth man at first. He let on to be considerable of a miner, but after a bit we sized him up.

"Did you ever," says Aggy whilst they was talking this and that about mines, "did you ever run your pay dirt through a ground-sluice rocker that was fitted up with double amalgam plates, top and bottom, and had the apron sewed on to a puddle board that slanted up, instead of down?"

"Why, sure!" says that feller, judging from Aggy's tone of voice that this was the proper thing to do. "We didn't use to handle our dirt no other way out in Uckle-Chuckle county."

"Is that so?" cries Aggy, very much surprised. "Well, do you know that very few people do?"

"It makes me tired," answers the man in a knowing way, "to think of the way some folks mines. Now that you've called my attention

to it, I don't recollect that I've heard of anybody using a ground-sluice rocker the way you speak of, since I left old Uckle-Chuckle county." And here I got a little violent again, because I can't conceal my feelings as well as Ag. I had to have several attacks on the way out when Ag was brought to close quarters, but we did pretty well on the trip.

"Well, gentlemen, there's the Golden Queen!" says Aggy when we turned the bend in the creek. "Seems funny that such an uninteresting-looking heap of rocks and stuff as that should be a gold mine, don't it?"

He sees by their faces that they was a little disappointed and that he'd better get in his crack first. Then the question come up of how we was to get them fellers to dig where we wanted 'em to without letting 'em see we wanted 'em to. But, Ag, he was able for it.

"Gentlemen," says he, "just stick your pick in anywhere's—one place is just as good as another. [That was the gospel truth.] But if you don't know just where to start suppose we try an old miner's trick, that Mr. Johnson there, I make no doubt, has done a hundred times."

Johnson, he smiled hearty. "Yes, yes! That old game!" says he. "I'd nearly forgot all about it—let's see—how is it you do it?"

"First you throw up a rock," says Ag.

"Oh, now I remember! Sure!" says Johnson. "You throw up a rock——" He stopped, smiling feeble and uncertain, waiting to hear the rest of it.

"Suppose we let Mr. Daggett [that was the tinhorn] do the throwing?" says Aggy. "He's a new chum, and we fellers always feel they have the luck. You may think this is all foolish superstition," says he, turning to the gambler, "but I tell you, honest, there's a good deal in it," and that was the second true thing Ag said that day.

Daggett, he threw up the rock.

"Now, go and stand over it," says Ag. Daggett's goes over according, but he ain't pointed in the right direction.

"Now, you turn around three times."

But after he done it we weren't no better off than before, for the chump landed just as he had started.

Ag surveyed the ground.

"Now, you walk backward three steps, then

four to the left, then back five more—ain't that it?" turning to Johnson.

"That's it!" says Johnson, slapping his leg. "That's her! The same old game! Lord! how it all comes back to a feller!"

"And just where you land, you dig," finishes Ag, handing Daggett's pick.

Daggett sinks the pick to the eye the first crack.

"Gosh!" says he. "Seems kind of soft here!"

"Is that so?" cried Aggy, highly excited. "Then you've struck gold for sure!" Having put it there himself he felt reasonably certain about it.

Well, they scraped up the bedrock, and Aggy offered to let Johnson pan it, but Johnson said he'd had to quit mining because his hands got so sore swinging a pan, so Daggett he kind of scrambled the dirt out after a fashion, and there at the bottom was our ounce and a half of gold! Well, I want to tell you there was some movement around there. We weren't in the same fix of a friend of mine who loaded a pan for a tenderfoot with four solid ounces, and when he slid the water

around on that nice little yeller new moon in the corner of the pan, "Humph!" says the tenderfoot, "don't you get any more gold than that out of so much dirt?"

Four ounces to the pan only means about a hundred thousand dollars a day income.

"Gooramighty!" says my friend, plumb disgusted. "I'd have had to borrow all the dust there is on the creek to satisfy you—did you think it was all gold?"

It broke my heart to see the way that man Daggett washed the fine gold into the creek, but he was familiar enough with handling the dust to know that an ounce was good money, even if it did look small. He turned pale, and begun to dig for dear life. There was no prying him loose. Well, that's a point Aggy hadn't counted on. He managed to slide over near me.

"For heaven's sake, Hy!" he whispers, "fly down to Uncle Peters' and get some more dust or we're ruined! I'll put it in the pan somehow, if you'll only get it here! Hold the old man up if you have to—but get that dust!"

I begun to holler very melancholy, and

prance around. By and by I pulled my freight loose and careless down creek.

"Say!" says Johnson, "there goes your friend, Mr. Jones! Shall I ketch him?"

"Oh, no," says Aggy. "Let him alone—he's used to it around here—he'll be back right away again."

When I got out of sight I humped for Uncle Peters.

"Sure!" says the old man, when I told him our troubles. "Take the whole blasted clean-up, Hy. We honest men has got to stand by each and one another—don't let that rascally tinhorn escape."

So I grabbed Uncle Peters' hard-earned savings and hustled back again.

As soon as I got in good view of the outfit, I knew something was wrong, by the look of Ag's face; but what it was got me, for there was both them fellers in the hole now, digging dirt like all possessed. Daggett had busted his supenders, and the other lad's coat was ripped up the back; but they didn't care; they were mauling the fair face of nature like genuine lunatics, and cussing and swearing in their hurry.

"Well, what's the matter with Ag?" thinks I. "Them fellers ain't got on yet, that's certain," but he looked as if he'd swallowed a stroke of lightning the wrong way. Never see a man—particular a man with Aggy's nerve—look so much like two cents on the dollar. I didn't have to be cautious in my approach; our friends were too busy to notice me.

"What the devil's loose, Ag?" says I.

"Oh, nothing!" says he. "Nothing much! They're taking it out by the hatful, that's all. Look!"

I looked, and sure enough! There was the pan with a small-sized shovelful of yaller-boys in it—pieces that would weigh up to $10 some of them. I couldn't believe my eyes.

"Where'd they get it?" says I.

"Out of the claim," says Aggy.

I nearly fell dead. "Out of the claim!" I yelled in a whisper. "Go on! Your whiskers are growing in!"

"Straight goods," says Ag, "and I had to stand here and see them do it! The Golden Queen is all my fancy painted her. The second pass that ice-pick-faced mut made he brought up a chunk as big as a biscuit. 'Is

that gold?' says he. 'Oh, yes!' says I. 'That's gold!' The truth come out of me before I thought—it knocked me to see that chunk. First time I ever made such a break—well—well. Why didn't it occur to me to try the taste of that piece of ground before I put in my flavouring? I was so d—d sure there wasn't $13 worth of metal in the whole twenty acres! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! To sprinkle a pocket that's near half gold with a little old pinch of dust, is one of them ridiculous and extravagant excesses my friend Shakespeare mentions! If there was a lily around here, I'd paint it, so's to go the whole hog."

"What in the name of all the Mormon gods are we going to do?" says I.

"Leave me think," he answers. And again he pulls his whiskers and whistles through his teeth.

There came a horrible yell from the hole. Daggett held up what seemed like a yaller potato. "Hooray!" says he. "Ain't that a humming bird?"

"You want to think quick," says I. "I feel something like murder rising in my veins."

"By gosh!" says Ag, snapping his fingers.

"I've got her! Come to, you son-of-a-gun. Come to!"

"How's that?" I asked, not just tumbling exactly.

"Come to!" says Ag. "Regain your scattered intelligence! How in blazes can I sell, then, without your consent?"

"Right you are! I'm off!" says I. And with that I cut loose.

"Help!" howls Aggy; "help!"

The two fellers were too busy to want to stop, but after I sent a brace of rocks in their direction, they concluded it might be as well to quiet me first. Lord! How I did carry on! I gave Ag the wink and pulled for the creek, and it was not long before, with Aggy's help, in we all three went, kersock.

They pulled me out and laid me on the bank, insensible.

"He's dead, I reckon," says Daggett.

"No," says Aggy, "I can feel his pulse beat, but it does seem to me there's a different look in his face somehow."

Then I opened my eyes.

"Why, Agamemnon," says I, "what am I doing here?"

"Hush!" says he, "you ain't been well."

"Dear me! You don't say!" And I rubbed my forehead with my hand.

"But I feel all right now—have I been this way long?"

"Nigh on to six months, Hy, old horse; ever since we hit it so rich on our claim—don't you remember about that?"

"Certainly," says I. "It seems like yesterday; it's as clear—but who are these people?"

Ag let on to be very much embarrassed. "Well," says he, "why—hunh—why—to tell you the truth, I thought I ought to get you out of the country, to where you could see an expensive doctor, and these are some folks I brought down to buy the claim—you being sick, you know!"

"Buy the claim!" I hollers, jumping up. "Buy the claim? What's this you're giving me? After all my toils and hardships and one thing and another, to sell the Golden Queen? Well, I want you to understand that nobody buys this claim, except across my dead body," says I.

Aggy, he looks completely dumfounded. "My! This puts me in an awkward fix," he

says. "Gentlemen, you see how I'm up against it? I can't sell without my partner's consent, now he's in his right mind; and, as far as that goes, the only reason I wanted to sell is removed. The dicker's off, that's the long and short of it."

Oh, how pleased that tinhorn looked! He swallowed three times and got red in the face before he answered a word.

"This may be all right, but it looks mighty queer to me," he growls.

"The ways of Providence is past understanding," says Aggy, taking off his hat. "To our poor human minds it does seem queer, no doubt. Now, Mr. Daggett," he continued, waving his arm in that broad-minded style he had, "I'm sorry things has come out this way for your sake, although a man that has such a sympathising nature as you will soon forget his own disappointment in the general joy that envelopes this camp. And to show you there's nothing small about me, you can have any one of those chunks you dug out this afternoon that don't weigh over two dollars."

Daggett sent the chunk to a place where it

would melt quick, and expressed a hope we'd follow it. With that he hopped into his go-cart and pulled for town, larruping the poor horse sinful. We had the pleasure of seeing the animile turn the outfit into the gully in return for the compliment. They scrambled in again and disappeared from view. Then Aggy reached out his hand to me.

"Don't tell me nothing but the plain truth, old man," says he; "I can't bear nothing except the plainest kind of truth, but on your sacred word of honour, ain't your uncle Ag a corker?"

"Aggy," says I, "I ain't up to the occasion. There ain't a man on earth could do credit to your qualities but yourself."

Then we shook hands mighty hearty.

Where the Horse is Fate

ONE thing's certain, you can't run a sheep ranch, nor no other kind of ranch, without hired men. They're the most important thing, next to the sheep. I may have stated, absent-mindedly, that the Big Bend was organised on scientific principles: none of your gol-darned-heads-or-tails —who's-it—what-makes-the-ante-shy, about it. Napoleon Buonaparte in person, in his most complex minute, couldn't have got at this end of it better than I did. It looked a little roundabout, but that's the way with your Morgan strain of idees. Here's how I secured the first man—he didn't look like good material to the careless eye.

Burton and me had just turned the top of that queer hill, that overlooks the Southwest road into the Bad Lands, when I see a parcel of riders coming out. Somehow, they jarred me.

"Easy," says I, and grabs Burton's bridle.

"What the devil now?" he groans. "Injuns? Road-agents?"

"Nope," says I, getting out my field glass. I had guessed it: there was the bunch, riding close and looking ugly, with the white-faced man in the middle. If you should ask me how I knew that for a lynching, when all I could make out with my eyes was that they weren't cattle, I give it up. Seems like something passed from them to me that wasn't sight. And also if you ask why, when through the glass I got a better view of the poor devil about to be strung, I felt kind towards him, you have me speechless again. I couldn't make out his face, but there was something——

"See here, Burton," says I. "There's your peaceful prairie hanging, in its early stage."

"What!" says he, sick and hot at the same time. "How can you speak of the death of a human being so heartlessly? Let me go!"

"Hold!" says I. "You haven't heard me through. Perhaps you can be more use than to run away and hide your eyes. I ain't got a word to say against quick law. I've seen her work, and she works to a point. She beats having the lawyers sieving all the justice out of it. All the same, they've been too careless

Through the glass I got a better view of the poor devil about to be strung

around here—that, and a small bad boy's desire to get their names up. I know one case where they hung a perfectly innocent man, for fun, and to brag about it."

He looked at me steady. I had suspected him of being no coward, when it comes to cases.

"Now," I says, "I don't know what that is down there. Perhaps it's all right; then you and me has got to stand by. If not—well, by the sacred photograph of Mary Ann, here's one roping that won't be an undiluted pleasure. Now listen. I'm something of a high private, when it comes to war, but no man is much more than one man, if the other side's blood is bad. Give 'em to me cold, and I can throw a crimp into 'em, for I don't care a hoot at any stage of the game, and they do. But when they're warm—why, a hole between the eyes will stop me just as quick as though I wasn't Chantay Seeche Red. Are you with me? You never took longer chances in your life."

He wet his lips, and didn't speak very loud nor steady, but he says: "You lead."

"Well, hooray, Boston!" says I. "Beans

is good food. Now don't take it too serious till you have to. Perhaps there ain't more'n a laugh in it. But—it's like smooth ice. How deep she is, you know when she cracks, or don't. Be as easy as you can when we get up to 'em. Nothing gained by bulling the ring. We must be prepared to look pleasant and act very different. Turn your back and see that your toy pistol is working."

Well, poor Burton! Wisht you seen him fumble his gun.

"I can't *see* the thing," says he, kind of sniffling. "I'd give something to be a man."

"You'll do for an imitation," I says. "Remember, I was born with red hair; comes trouble, this hair of mine sheds a red light over the landscape; I get happy-crazy; it's summer, and I can smell the flowers; there's music a long ways off—why, I could sing this minute, but there's no use in making matters worse. Honest, trouble makes me just drunk enough to be limber and—talk too much. Come on."

We single-footed it down the hillside. The party stopped and drawed together, four men quietly making a rank in front. That crowd had walked barefoot.

We come to twenty yards of 'em in silence; then a tall lad swung out towards us.

"How, Kola!" says I, wavin' my hand pleasant.

"How do you do!" says he, as if it wouldn't break his heart, no matter what the answer was.

"Why, nicely, thank you to hell," says I. "What's doin'? Horse race?"

"Probably," says he; then kind of yawning: "We're not expectin' company this morning."

"Well," I answered, "it's the unexpected always happens, except the exceptions. You talk like a man that's got something on his mind."

Don't think I'd lost my wits and was pickin' a row to no advantage. I'll admit the gent riled me some, but the point I had in view was what old Judge Hinky used to call "shifting the issue." I wanted to make one stab at just one man—not the whole party—on grounds that the rest of the crowd, who was plainly all good two-handed punchers, would see was perfectly fair. And I intended to land that stab so's they'd see I was no trifler. It was my

bad luck that not a soul in the crowd knew me —even by reputation, or my hair would have made it easy for me. So I put a little ginger in the tone of my voice.

"My friend," says the tall lad, "I wouldn't advise you to get gay with us. I would advise you to move right on—or I'll move you."

He played to me, you see. If he'd said, "*We*'ll move you," I'd had to chaw with him some more. Now I had him. Right under the harmless bundle of old clothes dangling from the saddle horn was the gun I'd borrowed from Ike—Mary Ann's twin sister, full of cartridges loaded by Ike himself—no miss-fire government issue. The next second that gun had its cold, hard eye upon Long Jim in front of me.

Whilst my hands seemed carelessly crossed on the horn, my right was really closed on the gun.

"I like to see a man back his advice," says I. "It's your move. Don't any other gentleman get restless with his hands, or I'll make our Christian brother into a collection of holes. Now, you ill-mannered brute," I says, "I don't care what your business is: it's my

business to see that you give me civil answers to civil questions."

He shrunk some. He was too durned important, anyhow, that feller.

"Quick!" says I. "Lord of the Mormon hosts! Do you think I'm going to yappee with you all day? Nice morning, ain't it? Say 'yes.'"

"Yes," says he.

"I thought so," says I. "It's a raw deal when a man that's sat a horse as long as me can't say howdy on the open, without havin' a pup like you bark at him."

"Why," says he, feelin' distressed, "I didn't mean to make no bad play at you." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder towards the prisoner, who sat like a white stone. "That's it. Misplaced horse. Got him with the goods."

"Oh!" says I. "Well, 'twouldn't have done no harm to mention that first place. I wasn't noticing you particular, till you got too much alive for any man of my size to stand." I dropped my gun. "Excuse haste and a bad pen," says I; "but why don't I draw cards? Both parents were light complected and I've voted several times. How is it, boys?"

"Sure!" says they. "Take a stack, bricktop."

"Gentlemen," I says; "one word more and I am done. The question as to whether my hair is any particular colour or not, is discussed in private, by familiar friends only—savvy the burro, how he kickee with hees hin' leg?"

They laughed.

"All right, Colonel!" says they. "Come with us!"

I had that crowd. You see, they was all under twenty-five, and if there's anything a young man likes—a good, hearty boy—it's to see a brisk play pushed home. I'd called 'em down so their spinal columns shortened, and gagging about my hair, and the style I put on in general, caught their eye. And their own laughing and easiness wasn't so durned abandoned, as Charley Halleck used to say. There was a streak of not liking the job, and everything a little "put on," evident to the practised vision.

I'd gained two points. Made myself pretty solid with the boys, for one, and give 'em something besides hanging their fellow-man

to think of for another: distracted their attention, which you got to do with children.

"I speak for my friend," says I, pointing to Burton.

"We hear you talk, Colonel," says the joker. "He's with us." So we trotted on towards the cotton-woods.

The line of work was marked out for me. I put on a grim look and sized the prisoner up from time to time as though he was nothing but an obstruction to my sight, although the face of the poor devil bit my heart. He glanced neither way, mouth set, face green-white, the slow sweat glassy all over him. Not a bad man, by a mile, I knew. It don't take me a week to size a man up, and I've seen 'em in so many conditions, red and pale, sick, dead, and well, that outside symptoms don't count for much.

I noticed another thing, that I expected. Out of the corner of my eye I see them boys nudgin' each other and talkin' about me. And the more I rode along so quiet, the more scart of me they got.

I tell you how I'd test a brave man. I'd line the competitors up, and then spring a fright

behind them. Last man to cross the mark is the bravest man—still, he might only be the poorest runner. With fellers like me, it ain't courage at all. It's lunacy. I ain't in my right mind when a sharp turn comes. Why, I've gone cold a year after, thinking of things I laughed my way through when they happened. But I'm not quarrelling with fate—I thank the good Lord I'm built as I am, and don't feel scornful of a man that keeps his sense and acts scart and reasonable.

In one way, poor old Burton, lugging himself into the game by the scruff of his pants, showed more real man than I did. Yet, he couldn't accomplish anything; so there you are, if you know where that is.

I said nothing until we slid off beneath the first tree. Then I walked up to the three leaders and says, whilst the rest gathered around and listened:

"Has this critter been tried?"

"Why, no!" says one man. "We caught him on the horse."

"Yes, yes, yes," says I, raising my voice. "That's all right. But lend me your ears till I bray a thought or two. I'm that kind of a

man that wouldn't string the meanest mistake the devil ever made without givin' him a trial."

"You give me a lot of trial this morning," says Long Jim.

I wasn't bringing up any argument; I was pulling them along with a mother's kind but firm hand, so I says to him: "Ah! I wasn't talking about *gentlemen;* I'd shoot a gentleman if he did or didn't look cross-eyed at me, just as I happened to feel. I'm talking about a man that' s suspected of dirty work."

Now, when a man that's held you stiff at the end of a gun calls you a gentleman, you don't get very mad—just please remember my audience, when I tell you what I talked. Boys is boys, at any age; otherwise there wouldn't be no Knights Templars with tin swords nor a good many other things. I spoke grand, but they had it chalked down in their little books I was ready and willing to act grander. Had I struck any one or all of 'em, on the range, thinking of nothing special, and Fourth-o'-July'd to 'em like that, they would have give me the hee-hee. Howsomever, they was at

present engaged in tryin' to hang a man; a job one-half of which they didn't like, and would dispose of the balance cheap, for cash. And I'd run over their little attempt to be pompous like a 'Gul engine. Position is everything, you bet your neck.

So up speaks Mr. Long Jim, that I've called a gentleman, loud and clear.

"You're *right,*" says he, and bangs his fist into his other hand. "You're dead right, old horse," says he; "and we'll try this son-of-a-gun now and here."

"Sure!" says everybody, which didn't surprise me so much. I told you I was used to handling sheep.

After a little talk with his friend, Long Jim comes up and says: "Will you preside, Colonel?"

"I have a friend here who is a lawyer," I suggested, waving my hand toward Burton.

The speaker rubbed his chin.

"I guess this isn't a case for a lawyer," he says. "The gentleman might give us a point or two, but we'd prefer you took charge. You see," he says to Burton and me earnestly; "there's been a heap of skul-duggery around

here lately—horse-stealin', maimin' cattle, and the like—till we're dead sick of it. This bucco made the most bare-faced try you ever heard of—'twas like stealin' the whiskers right off your face—and us fellers in my neighbourhood, old man and all, have saw fit to copper the deal from the soda-card. We ain't for doin' this man; we're for breaking up the play—'tain't a case of law; it's a case of livin' —so if you'll oblige, Colonel?"

"All right, sir; I'll do the best I can. Who accuses this man?"

"I," says a straightforward-looking young man of about twenty odd.

"Step up, please, and tell us."

"Why, it's like this," he says. "I'm ranchin' lone-hand down on Badger. There's the wife and two kiddies, and a job for a circus-man to make both ends meet—piecin' out a few cattle and a dozen hogs with a garden patch. All I got between me and a show-down is my team. Well, this feller comes along, played out, and asks for a drink of water. My wife's laid up—too darn much hard work for any woman—and I've got Jerry saddled by the fence, to ride for the doctor. Other horse

is snake bit and weavin' in the stable with a leg like a barrel. I goes in to get the water, and when I comes out there's this sucker dustin' off with the horse. Then I run over to C-bar-nine and routs the boys out. We took out after him, corrallin' him in a draw near the Grindstones. That's about all."

"Make any fight?" I asked.

"Naw!" says the man, disgusted. "I was wanting to put my hands on him, but he comes in like a sick cow—seemed foolish."

"How foolish?"

"Oh, just stared at us. We called to him to halt, and he stopped, kind of grinned at us and says: 'Hello!' I'd a 'hello'd' him if the boys hadn't stopped me."

"Prisoner," I says, "this looks bad. I don't know where you come from, but you must have intelligence enough to see that this man's wife's life might have depended on that horse. You know we're straggled so out here that a horse means something more than so much a head. Why did you do this? Your actions don't seem to hang together."

The poor cuss changed face for the first time. He swallered hard and turned to his ac-

We called to him to halt, and he stopped, kind of grinned at us and says: "Hello!"

cuser. "Hope your lady didn't come to no harm?" says he.

"Why, no thankee; she didn't," says the other lad. "'Bliged to you for inquirin'."

There was a stir in the rest of the crowd. The prisoner had done good work for himself without knowing it. That question of his proved what I thought—he was no bad man. Something peculiar in the case. Swinging an eye on the crowd, I saw I could act. I went forward and laid my hand on his shoulder, speaking kind and easy.

"Here," says I, "you've done a fool trick, and riled the boys considerable. You'd been mad, too, if somebody'd made you ride all day. But now you tell us just what happened. If it was intended to be comical, we'll kick your pants into one long ache, and let it go at that; if it was anything else, spit it out."

He stood there, fumblin' with his hands, runnin' the back of one over his forehead once in a while, tryin' to talk, but unable. You could see it stick in his throat.

"Take time," says I; "there's lots of it both sides of us."

Then he braced.

"Boys," says he, "I got a wife an' two little roosters too. I feel sorry for the trouble I made that gentleman. I got split like this. Come to this town with seven hundred dollars, to make a start. Five hundred of that's my money, and two hundred m' wife saved up—and she was that proud and trustin' in me!" He stopped for a full minute, workin' his teeth together. "Well, I ain't much. I took to boozin' and tryin' to put the faro games out of business. Well, I went shy—quick. The five hundred was all right," he says, kind of defiant. "Man's got a right to do what he pleases with his own money; but . . . but . . . well, the girl worked hard for that little old two hundred. God Almighty! I was drunk! You don't s'pose I'd do such a thing sober?" turning to us, savage. "That ain't no excuse, howsomever," he goes on, droppin' his crop. "Comes to the point when there's nothin' left, and then I get a letter." He begun taking things out of his pockets, dropping 'em from his big tremblin' hands. "It's somewheres here—ain't that it? My eyes is no good."

He hands me a letter, addressed to Martin

Hazel, in a woman's writing. "Well, that druv me crazy. So help me God, sir, I ain't pleadin' for no mercy—I'll take my medicine —but I didn't know no more what I was doin' when I jumped your horse than nothin'. I only wanted to get away from everybody. I was crazy. You read 'em that letter," says he, taking hold of me. "See if it wouldn't drive any man crazy."

Now, there's no good repeatin' the letter. It wasn't written for an audience, and the spellin' was accordin' to the lady's own views, but it was all about how happy they was going to be when Martin had things fixed up, and how funny the little boy was, and just like his pa, and, oh, couldn't he fix it so's they'd be with him soon, for her heart was near broke with waiting.

There was sand in my eyes before I'd read long, and that crowd of fierce lynchers was lookin' industriously upon the ground. One man chawed away on his baccy, like there'd be an earthquake if he stopped, and another lad, with a match in his mouth, scratched a cigarette on his leg, shieldin' it careful with his hands, and your Uncle Willy tried to fill

a straight face on a four-card draw, and to talk in a tone of voice I wasn't ashamed of hearing.

During the last part of the letter the prisoner stood thoughtful, with the back of his hand to his mouth; you'd never known he was settin' his teeth into it, if it wasn't for the blood dropping from his thumb.

"The prisoner will retire," says I, with the remnants of my self-respect, "while the court passes sentence. Go sit down under the tree yonder." He shambled off. Soon's he was out of hearin' the feller that lost the horse jumps up into the air with an oath like a streak of lightning. "Here's a fine play we come near makin' by bein' so sudden," says he. "I wouldn't have that man's death on my soul for the whole territory—think of that poor woman! And he's paid the freight. Colonel, I want to thank you for drawin' things down."

So he come up and shook me by the hand, and up files the rest and does the same thing.

"Now, friends," says I, "hold on. Court hasn't passed sentence yet. I pass that this

crowd put up to the tune of what it can spare to buy"—consulting the letter—"to buy Peggy a ticket West, kids included, exceptin' only the gentleman that lost the horse."

"Why, we ain't broke altogether on Badger!" says he. "You ain't goin' to bar me, boys?"

"Not on your life, if that's the way you feel," says I. I don't know what amount that crowd could spare, but I'll bet high on one thing. If you'd strong-armed the gang, you wouldn't start a bank with the proceeds after the collection was taken. There wasn't a nickel in the outfit. "I'm glad I didn't bring any more with me," says Burton, strapping himself.

Of course, I was appointed to break the news to the prisoner. He busted then; put his head on his arm and cried like a baby. But he braced quick and stepped up to the lads. "There ain't nothing I can say except thank you," says he. "I want to get each man's name so's I can pay him back. Now, if anybody here knows of a job of work I can get—well, you know what it would mean to me. Sporty life is done for me,

friends; I'll work hard for any man that'll take me."

"I got you," I says. "Come along with me and I'll explain."

Then we said by-by to the boys. I played the grand with 'em still, and I'll just tell you why, me and you bein' such old friends. Although it may sound queer, coming from my mouth, yet it was because I thought I might give them boys the proper steer, sometime. You can't talk Sunday-school to young fellers like that! They don't pay no attention to what a gent in black clothes and a choker tells 'em; but suppose Chantay Seeche Red—rippin', roarin' Red Saunders, that fears the face of no man, nor the hoof of no jackass—lays his hand on a boy's shoulder, and says, "Son, I wouldn't twist it just like that." Is he goin' to get listened to? I reckon yes. So I played straight for their young imaginations, and I had 'em cinched to the last hole. And after the last one had pulled my flipper, and hoped he'd meet me soon again, me and Burton and the new hired man took out after sheep. "But," says Burton, still sort of dazed, "God only knows what we'll meet before we find

them. Even sheep aren't so peaceful in this country."

He was right, too. However, when I start for sheep, I get 'em. You can see by the deep-laid plan I set to catch help for the ranch, how there's nothing for fortune to do but lay down and holler when I make up my mind.

Agamemnon and the Fall of Troy

ME and Aggy were snuggled up against the sandpaper edge as cute as anything, said Hy Smith. Even our consciences had gone back on us—they didn't have nothing to work on. The town looked like it had been deserted and then found by a party of citizens worse off than the first.

The only respectable thing in the hull darn shack-heap was Aggy's black long-tailed coat and black-brimmed hat. And they made the rest of the place look so miserable that Ag wouldn't have wore 'em if he'd had another hat and a shirt. We was a pair of twin twisters that had busted our proud and graceful forms on a scrap-iron heap.

I s'pose it was the turible depression of bein' stuck in such a hole, or some sudden weakenin' of the brain; but anyhow, in that same town of Lost Dog, Agamemnon G. Jones and Hy Smith ran hollerin' into a faint away game.

We paid ten dollars for a map showin' the location of the Lost Injun mine, from a paralytic partially roomin' at the Inter-Cosmopolitan Hotel. The Inter-Cosmopolitan had got pretty near finished, when the boom exploded with a loud sigh.

One-half the roof was missin', and the clapboardin' didn't come quite to the top, but that paralytic took it good-natured, sayin' that as he wasn't more'n half a man, half a hotel was plenty good enough for him. But ah! he allus wound up, if he could get the proper motion in his hind legs, he'd be up and find his Lost Injun mine, and after that no dull care for him.

I ain't goin' to describe that gentleman any more. When I say he unloaded a map of that Lost Injun mine, with the very spot marked with a red cross, anybody'll understand that the paralysis hadn't affected his head none.

You see, he was so quiet and patient under his afflictions, and he talked it off so smooth, that the flyest gent that ever lived could be excused for slippin' up and gettin' stuck in the discourse before he knew

that gravitation was workin' at the same old stand.

Now, for a straight-away dream-builder give me Aggy. He could talk the horns off a steer, and that steer would beller with happiness to think he was rid of a nuisance.

Ag stood six-foot-two by two-foot-six, and when he had the long-tailed coat, the plug hat, and his general-in-the-army whiskers working right, he only had to stick one hand in his vest and begin, "Fellow-Citizens and Gentlemen," and he could start anything from a general war to a barber-shop expedition to gather North Poles.

Give him a good, honest, upright gang of men that would weigh two hundred a head, and Aggy could romp with their money or them, so the worst used monkey in the cage would go home pleased.

Ag was built to play with huskies, not paralytics; so one day when he stooped and turned sideways to get into the paralytic's room, treadin' soft on the boards so's not to land the outfit in the cellar, the sight of the poor sick man lyin' there—everlastingly lyin' —his helpless hands turned palm up on the

covers, why, old Ag's heart was touched. He was that kind of grass-hopper, Ag, to whip-saw you out of a hundred and then lend you five hundred, even if he had to rip the pelt off somebody else to get it. I asked him about that trait onct.

"Why, Hy, my boy," says he, with his thumb in his vest, and his twenty-five cent cigar in his teeth—we was livin' at the risk of a high-roller hotel at the time—"in the first place, I'm a gentleman in disguise, and carelessness allows me to drop the disguise now and then; besides that," says he, "I hate these here conventions. Because I touch Mr. Jones for his wad, must I therefor scramble Mr. Ferguson? And if I stake Ferguson, must I open a free lunch for the country? Now, God forbid!" says Ag. "I started out being pleased by doing the things that pleased me, regardless of the vulgar habits of the mob. The mob can select its destination at any or all times it pleases, but I'm going to be Agamemnon G. Jones," says he. "The unexpected always happens, and I'm the unexpected," he says.

You wouldn't ask for a man to keep his statements clearer than that. I was the only

person had a line on him. I'd figger out every possibility for him and then sleep peaceful, knowing that it had come off different.

So while nobody'd figger on Ag's gettin' stuck by a paralytic, darned if he didn't come away with a map in his hands. "Here is our fortune, Henry," says he.

Well, now, I jumped sideways. "Look here, Aggy Jones, do you mean to say that legless wonder has stuck you?"

"Mr. Troy conveyed all rights in the property to me for $10, paid in hand, including this method of findin' out where it is," says he.

"Where'd you get the $10, and me not know it?" says I.

"Trivial, trivial," says Ag.

"And do you expect to follow that dotted line until you stub your toe over a half-ton nuggets?"

"Frivolous, frivolous," says Ag.

"Yes," I says, "yes. Trivial—frivolous—all right—but what's that red cross?"

"Shows the location plainly," says he, shiftin' his cigar. "Where the arms of that cross intersect, we double it, or turn nurses in the army."

Well, I stared at him. Too much thinkin' goes to a man's head sometimes.

"You feel anything strange about you anywheres?" says I.

"Yes," says he, tapping it. "This map—Accordin' to the scale of miles these here arms on the cross are somethin' like fifty miles long. Ah, what a merry, merry time we shall have, Hy, chasin' up and down glass mountains, eatin' prickly pear, drinking rarely, and cullin' a rattlesnake here and there to twine in our locks. It will seem like old times, dropping a rock in your boots in the mornin' to quell the quivering centipede and the upstanding and high-jumping tarantula."

"Say," says I, "do you think there's a mine here at all?"

"Mine!" says he, like I'd asked a most unexpected question. "Mine? Have we lived out of eyeshot of the most remarkable mine in the United States and Canada at any time we smoked the trail?"

"No," says I, "that's so; but, Ag, you ain't goin' to push for that red cross out in the middle of hell's ash-heap, are you?"

"Only a little ways," says he; "it's time we

left this anti-money trust behind us, and I always like to leave dramatically, if it's only to give the sheriff a run."

"More fast-footin' in this?"

"'Nary, but we shall meet some of our fellow-townsmen on the river to-morrow—all men who haven't done us a bit of good—and then we'll flap our gliders to a gladder land."

"But that ten dollars——"

"Look here. Let's *again* settle this money question once for all. Am I the financial expert for this party?"

"You be."

"Selah," says Ag. "And unlike the corporations in the effete East, where a high collar marks the gentleman, we mix amusement with our lives?"

"Sure," says I.

"Well, then," says Aggy, speaking with the frankness and affection of one or more friends to another, "I ask you to swallow your tongue and watch events."

"Keno," says I. "Produce your events."

So the next day we hooted it out toward the southeast, packin' grub only, and I never says a word.

Bimeby we see a lot of people comin' a horseback, on board waggons, and runnin' afoot.

"Each man with a map," says Ag. "Look at 'em dodge, Hy. They go out of sight for seconds at the time—'Shall we gather by the river, the beautiful, the beautiful Squaw River?'—I reckon."

We did. Everybody seemed surprised at seein' everybody else.

"Just come out for a picnic, friends?" says Ag.

"Oh, yes," says everybody. "Great old day and nice spot here—tired of town—thought we'd make a holiday."

"Good, good," says Aggy, his honest face gleamin' with joy. "Let's all eat now and swop maps afterward."

Things kind of stopped for a minute. If a man was unhitchin' a mule, he waited till you could count 1, 2, 3, and then continnered.

"What d'ye mean by 'map'?" says one lad, bent under a horse to hide his face.

"What do I mean?" says Ag, offended. "Why, I mean just what Noah Webster meant when the dove came back bringin' the

definition to his ark. I mean map—m-a-p, map—a drawin' that shows you the way to get to a red cross that doesn't exist on the face of nature. I like green crosses as a matter of taste, but all our paralysed friend had left was a red one, so I took that, not to be unsociable."

I've been at pleasanter lookin' picnics.

Finally the feller under the horse did some deep thinkin' and come out. "Have you honest got a map?" says he.

"To the Lost Injun mine? 'Heigh-o, the Lost Injun!'" sings Aggy. "Here she is, my friend, with all dips, angles, and variations; one million feet on the main lode; his heirs, assigns, orphans. *E pluribus unum,* forever and forever!"

"Yours ain't just the same as mine," says the feller, grimly spittin'.

"No," says Ag, "I reckon he spread it around. He didn't know this was the nearest ford on Squaw Creek, and we might likely come together."

And then arose a cussin', not loud, but with a full head of steam—it would make ordinary loud seem like the insides of a whisper—and a rush for horses.

"Peace, friends, peace!" says Aggy, standin' up his hull height and with his noble chest fillin' his black coat; his black whiskers expandin' in pride—a hootin', tootin' son-of-a-gun to look at. And when he said "peace," the earth shook.

The crowd stopped. "Think!" says Aggy. "Attempt the impossible! Think! Remember that paralytic is on a parlour car, flying swiftly toward the setting sun. I see the picture of that lonely railroad train whooping ties across the prairie. What is the use of throwing yourselves into a violent perspiration in a mad chase of a thing that no longer exists? The paralytic is no more; thy Faith Hath Made Him Whole." Aggy sank his voice to a beautiful whisper.

"Well, you got stuck yourself," pipes up old Grandpa Hope. "He, he, he, he shelled you too!"

"I admit it," says Ag, "and yet it is not quite what it seems. I borrowed Slit-Eyed Jenkins's two gilded nickels to get in this game. I further admit that the Government never should have left the word 'cents' off these nickels, to tempt poor but not bigoted

men; further, I'll say that if Jenkins had brightened them up he might have passed them for $3.89. But Jenkins puts a thief within his stomach that steals away his business ability, so that when I asked for them nickels he merely replied: 'Take the damned Yankee skin-tricks away, with my thanks.'

"I have noted in my travels that the person to pass immoral money on us is the agent whose mind is absorbed in selling you a diamond ring, that nothing but his desire to get rid of would drive him to sell; so in this case I dropped them nickels into the grateful and quiverin' hand of that paralytic, drew my man and—here we are," says Ag.

It was the first time I ever saw a gang of full-grown men blush at the same time.

Nobody had nothin' to say except Ag, who threw the lapel of his coat back and addressed the meeting.

"Gentlemen," says he, "as I have mentioned before, our paralysed friend has fled, departed, skinned out, screwed his nut far, far from here. Don't blaspheme in the very face of the Almighty by trying to be more ridiculous than you already are. If you arrive warm

and distracted, the few remaining inhabitants of Lost Dog will hold the dead moral on you the rest of your days. Cool off and wipe the word 'map' from your minds; turn from the villainies of man to the stark forces of nature; see where Squaw Creek has forced her remorseless and semi-fluid way through the mighty rampart of these Gumbo hills."

"I wish you would hush," said a puncher. "Leggo, Ag!"

"Here's where you get the worth of your money," says Ag. "You wouldn't play poker with *me,* would you? Of course not. I might get your money. In fact, I think I should, myself. But you would turn over ten fine large bones to a paralytic who made pencil sketches of a scene in the Alps and put the sign of the price on 'em—one sawbuck, or ten plunks? There is the sawbuck," says Aggy, tappin' his map. "But where are the plunks? Go to! There are no plunks. We kick the dust of Dog-town from our hind legs. Flee cheerily, one-time neighbours, to where a red cross fifty miles in length lies exposed to the sunlight, and then dig; dig for wealth beyond the dreams of avarice; dream of scow-loads of

gold floating on a canal of champagne. Don't forget to dig, because that will give you a muscle like a Government mule. And here's where we dig—out. Ta-ta, fellow-citizens, I never expected to get you so foul!"

"I think you was working with that feller," says one man, excited.

"Dream on—dream on," says Ag, "but don't make any motions in your sleep. I've heard that wakin' up somnambulists with a .44 Colt's is bad for their nervous systems." The lad was quiet. "Gentlemen," says Aggy, "if you have kicks, prepare to shed them now."

"No tickee—no kickee," says the cow-puncher. "But kindly don't bunch me with these Foundered Dogs," pointing to the rest.

"Certainly not," says Ag. "Come with us, friend?"

"I sure ought not to," says the puncher, scratchin' his head. "The ole man expects me to go down to Sweet Water and bring home a bunch of calves; but, thunder! calves just loves to play, and the ole man's got so quiet that Peace troubles his mind. Where you goin'?"

"Well," says Ag, sincerely, "you can search me."

"Fits me to half a pound," says the puncher; "ain't nothin' suits me better than to fall against somethin' I don't know the name of. Darn calves; if there's anything I don't like some more than other things, calves is the party of the first part—— Yekhoo!" says he, "c'm round here, Mary Jane." With that he waved his leg over the saddle and we was off.

"You fellers got any money?" says the puncher. We told him we was entirely innocent in that respect.

"Well, I got fifty of my own, and two hundred the ole man give me to buy any likely stock I might see. He'll stand on one leg and talk naughty to me when he finds I've spent it, but, Lord! there's no use remembering things that ain't happened yet, and besides, *he* was a hopper grass that flew, when *he* was a youngster. So that's all right. Gosh! don't it feel good to be out in the real fresh air oncet more!"

It sure was good. We made it, ride and tie, northeast by the compass. There's one good thing about these United States—so long's you keep movin' you're sure to run into a town somewheres.

We spent three nights out. Every camp, before rollin' in, Ag and me and the cow-puncher made up a quartette and sang, "How dear to my heart is the scenes of my chi-i-i-i-i-ld-hood," "Old Black Joe," and so forth, then laid down in faith no critter would trouble us that night. And say! it was simply dead great when we was lyin' on top of old Baldy Jones's Meza, the moonlight ketchin' the canyon lengthwise, and old Aggy comin' down, down, down, "Rocked—in ther—cradle—of—the—deep." Holy Smoke! he sounded fifty fathom. Honest, he made that slit in the earth holler like an organ. We was that enthusiastic we oncored him, leavin' our own pipes out. You talk about your theatres and truck! Give me Agamemnon G., a white night, and several thousand square mile of ghost-walk country—that's the music for me. He never waggled them black whiskers—just naturally opened his mouth, and the hills on the skyline pricked up their ears to listen. You could hear that big, handsome roar go bouncin' along the crags and wakin' up the wildcats in the cracks. Lord! what a stillness when the last echo stopped! Well, that cow-puncher, he had a

tear runnin' down the side of his nose, and I never felt so happy miserable in my life.

The only words spoke was by Ag. "Mary and Martha!" says he, "I've scart myself!" so we all rolled up.

Two days after we met a line of ore-wagons drug by mules. When we was twenty foot away the cow-puncher and the first driver give a holler, and in ten seconds they was shakin' hands and poundin' each other on the back, sayin', "Why, you damned old this and that!" When a lull come, the cow-puncher says, "Jack, let me present my friends!" so the driver he shook hands with us and says, "Any friend of Billy's on your meal ticket! Where you crowd of sand skinners headed for?" So, after some talk, he understood. "You want a town," says he. "Well," p'inting with the butt of his whip, "eighteen miles over yonder you'll find your place, if you're looking to make the sidewalks stand perpendicular; and twenty mile over there, if you want to find some of the nicest people outdoors. Pretty girls there, bet cher life. Chip Jackson filled me full of lead two months ago to get his name up—reg'lar kid trick; wanted to get a rep as

the man that put out Jack Hunter; he didn't put me out no more'n you see at present, but the folk over at Cactus used me white. Nussed me. Gee! A dream, gents, a dream! Real girls, with clothes that whispers like wind in the grass, 'Here I come! Here I come!'

"I got the prettiest, slimmest, black-eyed one marked down for me. I wanted her right off, but she said she couldn't consider it, and cried a little; so I cuddled her up and ca'med her down and said I'd do the considerin'. That's a great place—you fellers have seen enough rough house, why don't you shuck down that way?"

"I play her wide open," says Aggy, "from pretty little kittens in white to chawin' the ear off my fellow-man; but, to speak honest and straightforward, we ain't got the sinews of war to start a campaign in such a town, as I'd like to."

"Broke!" hoots Hunter. "Well, that don't go a minute! Here!" says he, "glue your optics to that." He chucked out a specimen peppered with yaller. "That's my mine. I'm just thinkin' of taking a half interest in the mint. You can pick her to go twenty thousand

to the ton—help yourselves, gents." He began sortin' rock. "Oh, here!" says he, "wait!"

Then he called his men—Greasers—and spoke to 'em firm in Spanish, that they was to bring their turkeys and empty their pockets. They rolled their eyes and talked about saints. "G'wan," says Jack, "if you fellers didn't know that I knew you were pinchin' me for at least two hundred a trip you wouldn't respect me. Come, shake your jeans, or I'll strip you clean when it comes you're between me and my friends."

So, mournin' and groanin', they unloaded about fifty pounds of the loveliest rock you ever see. There was a piece shaped like a cross that Ag picked out for himself, but the Greaser that owned it hollered loud, and Ag give it back to him. "With that in his clothes," says Aggy, "he can steal religiously—I wouldn't take that comfort from the poor soul for anything."

"These here Greasers get the best chunks," says Jackson, "because they got more time to hunt. Now, don't look cross-eyed," says he to 'em; "I pay you five a day, and you fish two

hundred for yourselves." At which the Greasers smiled a little again, feelin' that things weren't without their cheerful side.

"Boys, I got to leave you," says Hunter. "The next time you come through here, you'll see a log cabin built to hold two or more with comfort, because I ain't such a blatting fool to build a house that's going to take my wife's attention from me—log cabin's good enough. Don't mention that to Miss Lorna Goodwin when you see her, because I ain't took her in my confidence that far yet, but say a good word for your uncle, and by-by! Get up, there, Mary! Straighten them traces, Victoria! Oop! Oop! here we go clattering fresh! So-long, till later!" and away he went, the dust a-flyin'.

We landed in Cactus, ready and anxious to be respectable. We first took in the barber shop, had a bath and a trimmin' up.

"Fix these whiskers of mine," says Ag to the barber, "as though they was inclined to be religious, and a few strokes from a nice, plump, clean little widder's hand would make 'em fall. You can say what you please about widders," says Aggy, "but a woman who's

had one man and wants another has holt of the proper sand. It's a compliment when a widder shines up to a man. She's no amateur."

Then we bought clothes and played seven-up in the hotel till they was fixed to fit us. We wanted to stroll through Cactus right. After this was done we mashed our rocks, panned the result, and got $375 from the bank—all told, we had pretty nigh six hundred between the three of us.

The sight of us, trimmed, wouldn't cramp you none. That cow-punch he went an inch to the good over six foot. I came along about an eighth below him, and Aggy loomed far in the night. We all had features on our faces, and—well, Cactus sure was a pretty little town, with its parks and irrigated gardens, and when we strolled, we noticed the girls kind of let their sentences drag—probably because they didn't see us.

"Say, this is great!" said the cow-puncher. "That bug up there," p'inting to the electric light, "kinder exudes retail moonlight when he sings. But my! Here's where you get your fine-looking girls! I wonder how the old man 'ud take it if I said to him, 'Paw, dear, I'm

married.' I can lick him, though, even if I let him say sourcastic how far from that point I be. Oh, my Christian Spirit!" he whispers, "do you catch sight of that easy-mover in the white clothes! Holy Smokes! Let's introduce ourselves!"

Ag got up and marched forward. "Is this Miss Lorna Goodwin?" says he.

"No, sir," says the girl, kinder awed by the sight of him.

"I'm very sorry," says Ag. "We are strangers here, and we only knew a friend of Miss Goodwin's."

"Why," says the girl, "Lorna's right back of us. Shall I take you to her?"

Aggy bowed. "With such a guide, I'll follow anywhere," says he, "and I certainly would like to see Miss Goodwin."

"Excuse me a moment, Jim," says the girl, and off they went. I don't think I ever noticed what a handsome big cuss Ag was till seein' him walk beside that girl. Jim, the feller, wasn't so pleased. Howsomever, there was old Aggy, all in a minute, shakin' hands with many people and representing everything there was in sight, as usual. Then he marched the

crowd up and introduced us all. Say, I've lived a sort of hasty life, full of high jumps, but I'll admit that strolling around with all them nice girls and young fellers left a sore spot. I enjoyed it, but— Well, I had hold of something with hair as light as the sun in a haze, and with big blue eyes that looked up at me, when the head was bent down—and I can be as big a fool as any monkey in these United States—and the first thing you know, there won't be anything but girl in my conversation.

Anyhow, we stood well with the community and learned to our surprise that Christmas was only four days off. I hadn't knowed what day it was within a month.

The next day we found out somethin' still more surprisin'—at least Ag did.

"Do you know that we have a miracle in our midst, friends?" says he to me and the cow-punch. "Answer by mail. We have, and I'll tell you right now. The maimed and the halt are walking. The seller of maps is now beginning to get church funds in his hands; the one-time paralytic is the gaiest birdie that flies, and worse'n that, he's making a bold play

for Jack Hunter's girl, as her Pah-pah wears gold in his clothes to keep out the moths.

"He's making a strong push, so the head-waiter-lady tells me, and she thinks it's a shame, because he has a shifty eye, for all his religious talk, and Lorna's such a nice girl. 'Twas the kind friend who has the cellar on the corner, where anti-prohibition folks may indulge their religion unmolested, that told me of the work. He spotted him for a crook first peep. Also he seemed to grasp the fact that these almost orthodox whiskers of mine had been cut in other ways. So we talked confidential. The barkeep liked Cactus and prohibition, and said he didn't want the people done dirt by a putty-faced ex-potato-bug. 'These boys,' says he, 'put away more good stuff than the drinkers. They want the cussed rum disposed of forever. I make as high as thirty a day in this little joint, and the other part of the town is strictly on the level. Couldn't you give our friend, Mr. Paris, a gentle push?'"

"My God!" says I, "that bucko will be Helen the Fair and the rest of Homer if he ain't roped! He's making too free with old-

time literature. He used to be Troy," I says to the barkeep, and then I come here.

"Well, durn his tintype!" says we, "how did you get a look at him?"

"Introduced," says Ag, "he more'n half remembered me, but the strange place, the new cut in the whiskers, the hearty handshake, and the fact that I'd just come from N' York did the trick."

"Well, ain't you kind of got it in for him yet?" says the cow-punch.

Ag looked at him. "No," says he, "I revere him. But when he comes to ringin' in ancient history, he'll find that I'm a wooden horse that can gallop—that I'm only called Agamemnon for fun. That, really, I used to spank our former friend, Achilles, to develop his nervous system. Oh, no!" says Ag, "Troy to me is only a system of measurements, a myth, or the damnedest hole in the U. S. However, we shall be at the Christmas tree. And Mr. Troy—Paris will be there, also, as little as he dreams it."

We spent the next few days in a state of restlessness, because Aggy said he'd explain when the news would do us good. One thing

made the cow-punch ready for gun practice right off. Mr. Troy was a slippery cuss, and he had rather ki-boshed Jack Hunter's girl. He hung around her, fetched and carried, nailed up greens for her and all that, till you could see he was leaving himself two trails—either skip with the funds or marry the girl. He had one day left to choose. Having locoed the townsfolk into giving him the management of the festivities, he stood well, and he wasn't a bad looker neither. He had an easy, slippery tongue for a young girl: not like Ag's methods—in any gatherin' Ag could make George Washington or General Grant look like visitors—but smooth and languishin'.

I had to calm the cow-punch by telling him we was in a law and order community, and that shootin' was rude, also that Aggy could be counted on to do everything necessary. That morning Ag gave me strict orders, according to which I loped out to a little canyon where a spring bubbled, and there, sure enough, was Troy, talkin' honey to Jack's girl. I slid close enough to hear him. He made out a good case, but when it come to the last card the girl wasn't so interested in the story. She

had sense after all; girls can't be blamed for being a little foolish. Well, Troy, he argued and urged, till at last up gits little Lorna and says it's impossible, and that there's another man in the question, and so Troy stands there mournful till she's out of sight, and then hikes for the railroad, with a two-hundred dollar cash present for the minister in his pocket, and probably another seventy-five or a hundred in odds and ends.

And after him went Hy Smith, also. He flagged a train about a mile out of town and hopped aboard. I come out of the bush and took the last car, telling the brakie a much-needed man had got on forward. Also, I took the Con. into my confidence. So just when we pulled into the next town I steps behind Mr. Troy, puts a gun against the back of his neck, and read the paper Ag had prepared for me.

"Now, Mr. Troy, alias Paris, alias Goat, etc., come with me, or go forward in the ice-box. Don't make a fuss or we'll alarm the ladies—I've read you the warrant!"

He walked ahead as meek as Moses. By a cross-cut across the hills it weren't more than

four mile to Cactus, and Troy stepped it like a four-year-old.

We come in behind the church. "That you, Hy?" says Ag. "Bring our friend, Mr. Troy, through the rear. If you don't know the way, he'll sell you a map for ten dollars."

"Whenever you want to die, just holler," says I to Troy. It was a quiet journey. When we got inside, there was Ag and the cow-punch, smiling kindly. Ag was mixing paint in a pot.

"They used few colours in this edifice," says Ag, "otherwise I could have produced something surprising. Blue for the hair," says he, "a sign of purity." So he painted Troy's hair blue. And he painted a red stripe down the nose and small queer rings all over his face, and with a pair of lamp scissors he roached Troy's name like a mule—and, well, he did make something uncommon out of Troy.

"Lovely *thing!*" says Ag, coquettish, and pokes him with his finger."

Troy, he didn't say nothing. In fact, when you come to think of it, there wasn't many sparkling thoughts for him to put out.

"I got a few other traps we need," says Ag, pulling out a long coiled wire spring (off a printing press, I reckon). "Come on," he says, "and we'll fix something to entertain all the children." We put a belt on Troy, run a line through it and hitched on the spring. The cow-punch, he crawled up to the peak of the roof with a pulley, made it fast and passed Mr. Troy's line through it. Then Ag took a brace and bit, boring a one-inch hole in the floor, and give instructions to a pair of Injuns in the cellar.

Then we yee-heed brother Troy to the top of the tree, running the rope's end down the hole to the Injuns. Troy had a lighted candle tied fast to each hand.

"Now, you Greek mythology," says Ag, "mind my words; you are to flap your arms and squeak 'Mah-mah' as you merrily go up and down; otherwise, my kyind assistants in the cellar are instructed to pull down so hard that when they let go, you and that able-bodied spring will fly right through the roof. Light the candles, boys." We lit the candles, slipped the curtain, and the crowd filed in—face to face with Brother Troy, blue-haired

Troy; ringed, striped, and be-speckled; flyin' through the air ten foot a trip, flappin' his arms and yelling "Mah-mah."

I reckon no such thing had ever been beheld by anybody in that church before, no matter how many Christmas trees they'd seen. They just stood like they was charmed, and their heads and hands was keeping motion with Troy.

Ag give two small knocks with his heel, and Troy went right up into the darkness; the cow-punch grabbed him, cut his lines, and said: "Skin, you sucker! Hike along the edge and jump out the belfry."

The folks thought it was a grand piece arranged for their benefit, and they hollered and laughed and clapped their hands. But there was one deacon who hadn't been nursed by the Dove of Peace all his life. In fact, he reminded me of a man who used to deal stud-poker up Idaho way; and he came around and cast a steady eye on Aggy.

"You people might have lost there," says Aggy, passing out the minister's purse and the other truck. "Paris is gay and not orthodox."

The deacon, he nodded his head. "I had a pipe line run on that geeser from the minute he blew in," says he. "Where's he now?"

"Runnin' fast," says Aggy; "just where I don't know."

"You gentlemen goin' to tarry with us?" says the deacon. "It's a fine little town and I'm glad to be good, but crimp my hair if I don't feel lonesome at times. I should like to exchange reminiscences occasionally. I hope you'll stay."

"It's a pleasant man who keeps the corner cellar," says Ag, "but his whiskey has the flavour of old rags. Now my throat——"

"Don't say a word," says the deacon, drawin' a small half-gallon flask out of his clothes. "Do the snake-swallowin' act to your hearts' content, gentlemen, and remember there's just simply barrels more where that comes from. And now," says he, when the gurgling stopped, "let's go in and see the fun. Them's awful innocent, good-hearted folk, boys. I tell you straight, it works in through my leather to see 'em play."

We stepped where we could look at them; happy-faced mothers, giggling and happy lit-

tle kids, and pretty girls—lots of 'em. And it lit through my hide, too.

"I s'pose you kin explain, Mr. Jones?" says the deacon, punchin' Ag in the ribs.

"Explain?" says Ag, proud. "Appoint me custodian of the bottle, and I hereby agree to explain anything: why brother Paris left us so completely, what became of Charley Ross, who struck Billy Patterson, where are the ships of Tyre, or any other problem the mind of man can conjure, from twice two to the handwriting on the wall."

"Forrud, march," says the deacon simply, and we j'ined them kind and gentle people under the Christmas tree.

A Touch of Nature

"THESE are odd United States," said Red. They certainly are. I'm thinking of a person I knew down in the Bill Williams Mountains, in Arizona. He was Scotch and his name was Colin Hiccup Grunt, as near as I could hear it. I never saw anything in Arizona nor any other place that resembled him in any particular.

We met by chance, the usual way, and the play come up like this: I'm going cross country, per short-cut a friend tells me about—this was when I was young; I could have got to where I was going in about four hours' riding, say I moved quick, by the regular route, but now I'm ten hours out of town, and all I know about where I am is that the heavens are above me and any quantity of earth beneath me. For the last two hours I've been losing bits of my disposition along the road, and now I'm looking for a dog to kick. Here we come to a green gulch with a chain of pools at the bottom of it.

I got off to take a drink. Soon's I lay down there's a snort and a clatter, and my little horse Pepe is moving for distance, head up and tail up, and I'm foot loose forty miles from nowhere. This was after the time of Victorio, still there was a Tonto or two left in the country, for all the government said that the Apaches were corralled in Camp Grant, so I made a single-hearted scamper for a rock.

Then I looked around—nothin' in sight; I raised my eyes and my jaw dropped. Right above me on the side-hill sits a man, six foot and a half high and two foot and a half wide, dressed in a wool hat, short skirts, and bare legs. His nose and ears looked like they'd been borrowed from some large statue. His hair was red; so's mine, but mine was the most lady-like kind of red compared to his—a gentle, rock-me-to-sleep-mother tint, whilst his got up and cussed every other colour in the rainbow. Yes, sir; there he sat, and he was knittin' a pair of socks! For ten seconds I forgot how good an excuse I had to be vexed, and just braced myself on my arms and looked at him and blinked. "Well, no wonder, Pepe busted," thinks I, and with that my troubles

Yes, sir; there he sat, and he was knittin' a pair of socks!

come back to me. "I don't know what in the name of Uncle Noah's pet elephant you are," says I to myself. "Male and female *he* made 'em after their kind, and your mate may do me up, but if I don't take a hustle out of you there'll be no good reason for it." And feeling this way, I moved to him.

"Now," says I, "explain yourself."

"Heugh!" says he, just flittin' his little gray eyes on me and going on with his knittin' as if he hadn't seen anything worth wasting eyesight on.

I swallered hard. "Another break like that," I thinks, "and his family have no complaint."

"One more question and you are done," says I. "Do you think it's fair to sit on a hill and look like this? How would you feel if you come on me unexpected, and I looked like you?"

By way of reply, he reached behind him—so did I. But it wasn't a gun he brought forth; it was a sort of big toy balloon with three sticks to it. Without so much as a glance in my direction, he proceeded to blow on one stick and wiggle his fingers on the others.

Instantly our good Arizona air was tied in a knot. It was great in its way. You could hear every stroke of the man filing the saw; the cow with the wolf in her horn bawled as natural as could be, and as for the stuck pig, it sounded so life-like I expected to see him round the corner. But at the same time it was no kind of an answer to my question, and I kicked the musical implement high in the air, sitting down on my shoulder blades to watch it go, and also to acknowledge receipt of one bunch of fives in the right eye, kindness of Grandma in the short skirts. Beware of appearances! Nothin' takes so much from the fierce appearance of a man as short skirts and sock-knitting, but up to this date the hand of man hasn't pasted me such a welt as I got that day.

Then, sir, Grandma and I had a real good old-fashioned time. I grabbed him and heaved him over the top of my head. "Heugh!" says he as he flew. He'd no more than touched ground before he had me nailed by the legs, and I threw a handspring over his head. From that on it was just like a circus all the way down the hill to where we fell off the

ledge into the pool—twenty-five foot of a drop, clear, to ice-water—wow! 'J'ever see a dog try to walk on the water when he's been chucked in unexpected? Well, that was me. I was nice and warm from rastlin' with Grandma before I hit, and I went down, down, down into the deeps, until my stummick retired from business altogether. I come up tryin' to swaller air, but it was no use. I got to dry land. Behind me was the old Harry of a foamin' in the drink—Grandma couldn't swim. Well, I got him out, though I was in two minds to let him pass—the touch of that water was something to remember.

"Now, you old fool!" says I, when I slapped him ashore. "Look at you! Just see what trouble you make! Scarin' people's horses to death and fallin' in the creek and havin' to be hauled out! Why don't you wear pants and act like a Christian? Ain't you ashamed to go around in little girl's clothes at your age? What in the devil are you doing out here, anyhow?"

With this he bust out çryin', wavin' his hands and roarin' and yellin', with tears and ice-water runnin' down his face.

"Well!" says I; "I don't catch you, spot nor colour, any stage of the deal. You'd have me countin' my fingers in no time. I'm goin' to sit still and see what's next."

By-and-by he got the best of his emotions, come over to me and blew a lot of words across my ears. From a familiar sound here and there, I gathered he was trying to hold up the American language; but it must have been the brand Columbus found on his first vacation, for I couldn't squeeze any information out of it. I shook my head, and he spread his teeth and jumped loose again.

"No use," says I. "I dare say you understand, but the only clue I have to those sounds is that you've eat something that ain't agreed with you. Habla V. Español?"

"Sí, señor!" says he. So then we got at it, although it wasn't smooth skidding, either; for my Spanish was the good old Castilian I'd learned in Panama, whilst his was a mixture of Greaser, sheepblat, and Apache, flavoured with a Scotch brogue that would smoke the taste of whiskey at a thousand yards.

He explained that while he wasn't fully acquainted with my reasons for assault-and-

Twenty-five foot of a drop, clear, to ice-water—wow!

batterin' him in the first place, he was deeply grateful for my savin' his life in the second place.

"Yes," says I. "But why do you cry?"

Well, that was because his feelin's was moved. I'll admit that if I sat on a rock in the Bill Williams Mountains, thinking myself the only two-legged critter around, and somebody come and kicked my bagpipes in the air and dog-rassled me down forty rod of hillside, afterwards fishing me out of the drink, my feelin's would be moved too, but not in that way. And at the time I'm telling you about, I was young—so young it makes me tremble to think of it—and I knew a heap of things I don't know now. For this I thought slightin' of Grandma, notwithstanding the tall opposition he put up. Somehow I couldn't seem to cut loose from the effect of his short skirts and fancy work. But I let on to be satisfied. He amused me, did Grandma.

Next he invites me to come up to his shanty and have a drop of what he frivolously called "fusky"—"*Uno poquito de fuskey—aquardiente—senor.*" Wisht you could have heard his Spanish—all mixed up—like this: He says

he's "greetin' "—meanin' yellin', while it's "*grito*" in Spanish, and his pronunciation had whiskers on it till you could hardly tell the features. But we got along. When we struck the cabin the old lad done the honours noble. I've met some stylish Spaniards and Frenchmen and Yanks and Johnny Bulls in my time, yet I can't remember aryone who threw himself better'n Colin Hiccup. There's no place where good manners shows to better advantage than on a homely man; the constant surprise between the way he looks and the way he acts keeps you interested.

"To you, señor," says Colin. "Let this dampen the fires of animosity."

"To you right back again," says I. "And let's pipe the aforesaid fires clean down into the tailin's." So there we sat, thinking better of each other and all creation. The fires of animosity went out with a sputter and we talked large and fine. I don't care; I like to once in a while. I don't travel on stilts much, yet it does a man good to play pretty now and then; besides, you can say things in the Spanish that are all right, but would sound simple-minded in English. English is the tongue to

yank a beef critter out of an alkali hole with, but give me Spanish when I want to feel dressed up.

We passed compliments to each other and waved our hands, bowing and smiling. In the evening we had music by the pipes. I can't say I'd confine myself to that style of sweet sounds if I had a free choice; still, Colin H. Grunt got something kind of wild and blood-stirrin' out of that windbag that was perfectly astonishin', when you took thought of how it really did sound. And—I sung. Well, there was only the two of us, and if I stood for the bagpipes it was a cinch he could stand my cayodlin'.

Three days I passed there in peace and quiet. I hadn't anything on hand to do; the more I saw of my new pardner the better I liked his style, and here was my gorgeous opportunity to make connections with the art of knitting that might be useful any amount, once I come to settle down.

It was a handsome little place. The cabin was built of rocks. She perched on the hillside, with three gnarly trees shadin' it and a big shute of red rock jumping up behind it.

Colin had a flower garden about a foot square in front, that he tended very careful, lugging water from the creek to keep it growing. Climbing roses covered one wall, and, honest, it cuddled there so cunnin' and comfortable, it reminded me of home. Think of that bare-legged, pock-marked, sock-knittin' disparagement of the human race havin' the good feelin' to make him a house like this! It knocked me then, because, as I have explained, I was young. I have since learned that the length of a jack-rabbit's ears is no sure indication of how far he can jump.

We spent three days in this pleasant life, knocking around the country in the daytime, chinnin' and smokin' under some rock and discussin' things in general, and at night we made music, played checkers, and talked some more.

During this time his history come out. Naturally, I was anxious to know how such a proposition landed in the Bill Williams Mountains. It happened like this:

Colin came from an island in Scotland where, I judged, the folks never heard of George Washington.

His chief had the travel habit, and Colin went along to bagpipe.

He'd followed his chief to France and then to Mexico, where the band of Scotties tried to help Maximilian help himself to Uncle Porfirio Diaz's empire. There was a row, and the son and heir of the house of Grunts was killed, old Colin Hiccup fightin' over his body like a red-headed lion in short skirts.

It was at night he told me about it, and at this point he got excited. He pulled his old sword down from the wall and showed me how everything occurred. It was as close a call as I can recollect. I'd rather meet an ordinary man bilious with trouble than have a friend like Colin tell me exciting stories with a sword. There were times when you couldn't have got a cigarette paper between me and that four-foot weapon. I was playing the villains, you understand.

Well, the Maximilian game was up, and when Colin got well (some lad with no sporting blood had shot him in the head) he slid over to the United States and resumed sheep herding, knitting, and bagpiping allee samee old country. I suspect the boss of the ranch

hired Mr. Grunt more because he liked the old boy than for any other reason, inasmuch as he didn't have more'n a hundred sheep in the bunch; besides, what with getting shot in the head and grieving for his chief and one thing and another, Colin was a *little* damaged in the cupola—not but what he was as sensible as I could understand most of the time—but—well, kind of sideways about things; like not learning English and keeping on dressing in knee skirts and such.

What troubled him the most was that no such thing as a clan could be found. I explained to him as best I could that as us Americans represented Europe, Asia, and Africa in varyin' proportions, it was a little difficult to get up a stout clan feeling—local issues would come in.

Yes, he said he understood that, but it was a great pity, and on the fourth night I was there he got so horrible melancholy over it that it was dreadful to see. I didn't know how to cheer him up exactly, until we'd had two—perhaps three—drops together. Then an inspiration hit me in the top of the head.

"Come along outside with the night-

cracker," says I. "I'll take the sword and we'll have one of those dances you've told me about."

He brightened up at that, and after a few more drops consented. I felt right merry by this time, and it wasn't long before old Colin limbered considerable. There it was, nice bright moonlight, nobody around to pass remarks; nothing to trouble. So bime-by we pasted her hide, wide and fantastic, with the bagpipes screechin' like a tom-cat fight in a cellar. I was tickled to death lookin' at our shadows flyin' around—one of the times I was easily pleased; I must say I enjoyed the can-can.

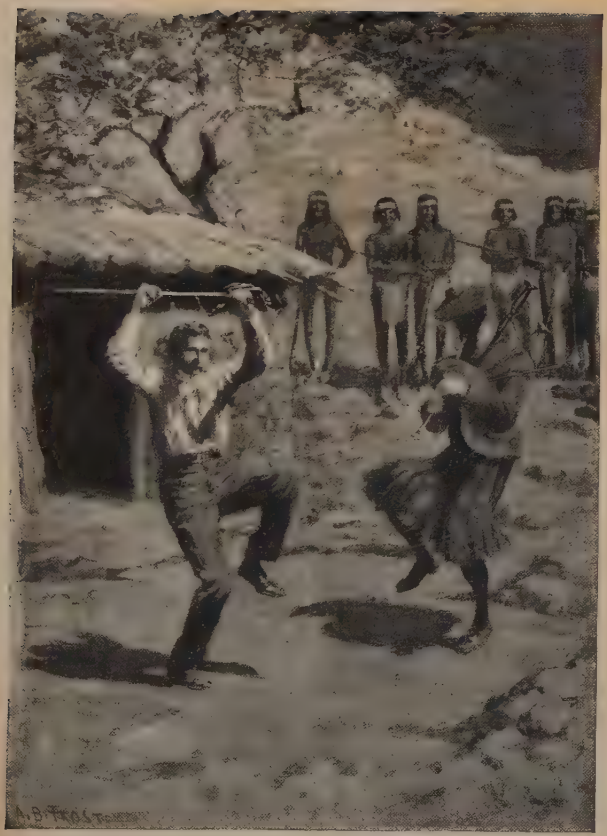
And then, alas! All my joy departed and went away, for when my eye happened to slide behind me, it fell on a Tonto brave—a full-sized Tonto-Yuma brave, that ought to be seen at Camp Grant, dressed in a pocket handkerchief, a pair of moccasins, and a large rifle.

"By-by, my honey, I'm gone!" I sings to myself—never missin' a step, however, for to let that Injun know I was on to him would be a sign of bad luck. I wiggled around kind

of careless to see if there was any more of him. There was. Nine more. Here was Saunders Colorado and Colin Hiccup Grunt, fortified by—say six, drops of Scotch whiskey, a Scotch sword and a Scotch bagpipe, up against ten Tontos armed with rifles. I would have traded my life interest in this world for an imitation dead yaller dog. "Oh, they won't do a thing to us, thing to us, thing to us!" sings I to myself, hoppin'around *so* gleefully, keepin' time to the bagpipes. "Whoop her up, Colin!" I hollers. "On with the dance, let joy be unconfined!" That was in my school reader, so it ought to be true. My joy was unconfined all right enough—she'd flew the coop long since.

At that Colin really turned himself loose. He'd warmed to the occasion and climbed into the spirit of the thing. His eyes was shut and he was leaping five foot in the air at a pass, wagglin' his head from side to side. And as for them bagpipes, he simply blew the mangled remains of all the sounds since the flood out of the big end—he took silence by her hind leg and flapped her into rags.

I pranced like a colt, wonderin' why we



"Whoop her up, Colin!" I hollers

didn't get shot or something. At last I couldn't stand feeling all them hard-coal eyes behind me, so I whirls around as if I'd simply waited my time, and capered down that line of Injuns, wavin' the sword over their heads, looking far away, and smilin' the easy grin of the gentleman who pets the tiger in the circus parade.

"Oh, Colin!" I chants, as if it was part of a war-song; "understand English for once in your life and keep that squealer yelpin' or these ham-coloured sons of Satan will play a tune on us—give it to 'em, Colin, my b-o-o-y —let the good work go ah-ah-ah-ah-on!"

I reckon he made me out, for, after one sharp blat (I suppose when he opened his eyes), the old bagpipes went on whining same as before.

I made two trips up and down the line, then flung the sword up in the air and yelled: "Bastante!"

Come silence, like a fainting fit—the thickest, muckiest silence I ever heard.

"Your house, amigos," I says. "In what way may we serve you?" I had an idea of what way they would serve *us*—fried, likely,

with a dish of greens on the side—but I thought I'd get in my crack first.

It was weary waiting to see what kind of play the bucks was going to make. They had the immortal on us, and what they said went.

At last the oldest man in the party stepped out. I guess the Yankee got his love for Fourth of July gas-displays from the Injuns, for there's nothin' that those simple-hearted children of nature love better than chawing air.

"Amigos," says the old buck. "Mira. We are not Gilas; we are not Mescaleros; we are not Copper-miners; neither Jicarillas, Coyoteros, nor Llaneros." All this very slow and solemn. Very interesting, no doubt; but a *little* long to a man waiting to see whether he's about to jump the game or not. "No," thinks I; "nor you ain't town-pumps nor snow-ploughs nor real-estate agents—hook yourself up, for Heaven's sake, and let go on your family history."

"No," says he, shaking his head. "Nada, I am Yuma—they are Yuma."

"I sincerely hope so," thinks I. "And I

wish you'd let us in on the joke. I'm dyin' for lack of a laugh this minute."

"Si, señores," says he. "We are not Apaches; and we are not now for war. Before, yes. Now we are peaceful. But the white man has put us on reservation at Camp Grant, and there bad white men bother us. We are all braves; we do not wish to be bothered. So we shoot those white men for the sake of peace, and then we come away. We come here last moon. We see this man," pointing to Colin Hiccup. "At first my young men wish to shoot at him, to see him hop, but I say 'no'—we are peaceful; besides, he is a strange white man. I think he is a great chief and comes here to make medicine. Do you not see how small is the rebaño and how large the man? And how he dresses like a woman? And there we hear the music he makes. Then I know he is great medicine. It is beautiful music he makes to the Great Spirit. It makes our hearts good. We wait; see you come. See two big medicine men fight, then be friend again. Know, by the hair, both same medicine. To-night sounds the music more and more. We come and see dance. We have

council. All say, when dance is over, we ask white man to be chief. Just one chief—two chiefs, like calf with two heads, no good. You choose. We have no chief since Mangas Colorado. He make fight. Fight hard but no good. Now we are for peace. I say it."

He threw down his rifle and waited. The other braves dropped their guns, crash!

"We will talk," says I, drawing myself up tall.

"Buen," says he, and Colin and me withdrew.

"Now, my Scotch friend," says I, when we got out of hearin', "we are up against it, bang! It's all right for them Injuns to talk of how peaceful they are, but I'll bet you there ain't a bigot among 'em. If we don't slide down their gutter, they'll do us harm. How're we to decide who puts his neck in the lion's mouth?"

But old Colin wasn't listening to me. "They'll make me chief," says he. "I'm tired of herding sheep." His little grey eyes was shining.

"Well, you knock me every time," says I. "Do you mean you want to trot with them?"

"They stick together—they have a clan."

I got some excited. "Here, now," I says; "this lets me out of a good deal of trouble to have you take it this way, but all the same as I've drunk your whiskey and ate your bread, I'll stand at your back till your belt caves in. You pass this idea up—it's dangerous—and I'll make you a foolish proposition; you take the bagpipes and I'll take the sword and we will pass away to lively music. Darn my skin if I'll see a friend turned over to those tarriers and sit still."

"Heugh!" says he. "What's a man but a man? As safe with them as anywhere—and what do I care about safe? What's left me, anyhow? Will you watch the sheep till they send from the ranch?"

"Why, yes," says I. "But——"

He waved his hand and walked towards the Injuns. "Voy," says he.

"Hungh!" says they. "Bueno."

I laid my hand on his shoulder for one more try. Every brave picked up his gun and beaded me.

"Drop the guns!" says Colin Hiccup Grunt. And down went the guns. You'd be

surprised at his tone of voice; it meant, as plain as you could put it in words, "We will now put down the guns." Oh, yes, it meant it entirely. And he looked a foot taller. The change had done him good.

"Well," thinks I; "my boys, I reckon you've got your chief, and as there ain't another peek of light out of this business, I shelve my kick."

"Where is the señor's horse?" asks Colin.

"In the hills," says the Injun, before he thought.

"Bring it," says Colin.

"Ha!" says all the Injuns, and they sent a man for my mustang. That quick guess surprised the whole lot of us.

We went together to the cabin, to get his belongings and to cache the whiskey. If it come into our friend's heads to rummage we might have a poor evening of it.

"Leave me that sock as a momentum," says I.

"'Tain't finished," says he.

"Never mind. I want it to put under my pillow to dream on," and I have it yet.

One half-hour after that I sat in the door-

way, scratching my head and thinkin'; whilst before my eyes marched off Colin Hiccup Grunt, Great Peace Chief of the Yumas, bare-legged and red-headed, with his wool hat on one side and his bagpipe squealin', at the head of his company. You won't see such a sight often, so I watched 'em out of eyeshot.

It chanced I was asleep inside when the rider came from the ranch, so when I stuck my head out to answer his hail, "Why," says he, "how you've changed!" He was surprised, that man.

"You ain't done nothing to old Scotty?" says he, looking cross.

"No," says I. "Hold your hand. He's gone off and joined the Injuns."

Then I up and told him the story.

"Hungh!" says he. "Well, that's just like him!"

THE END